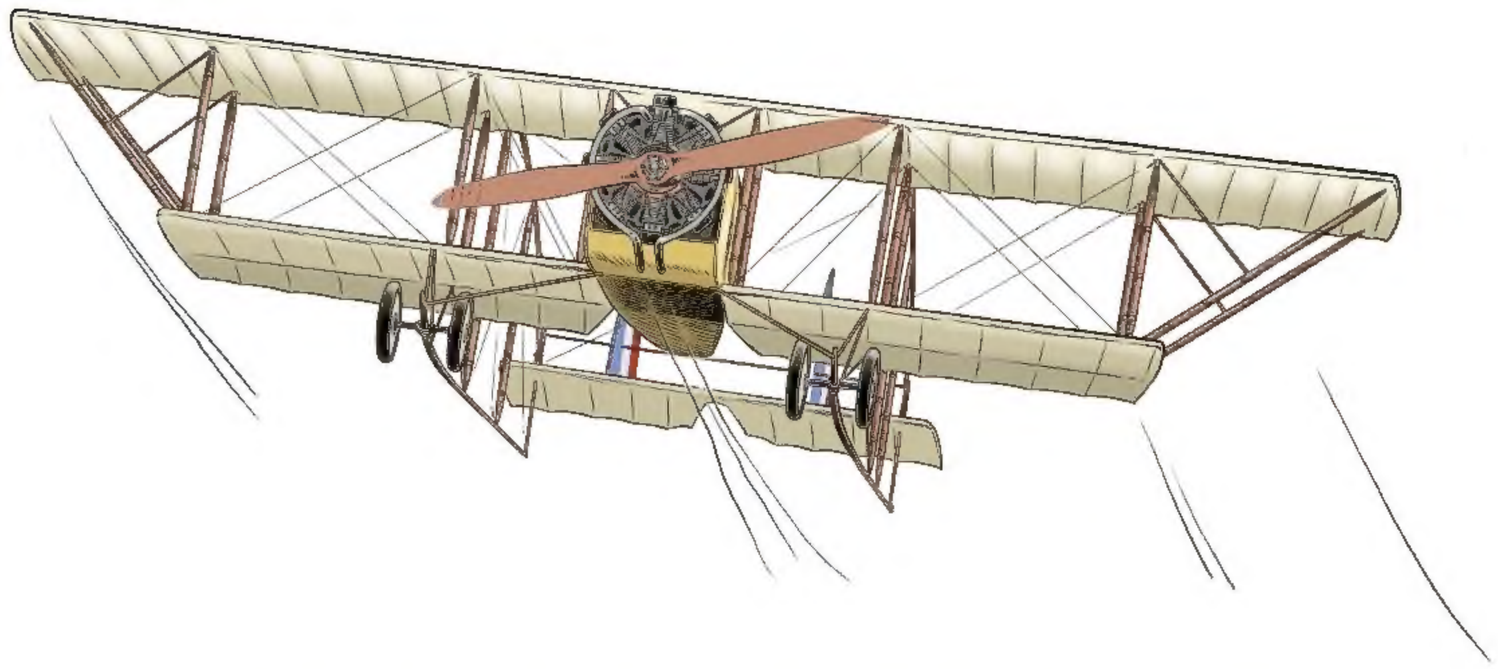
KRAEHN · MILLIEN

THE AVIATOR

2. The Long Climb



THE AVIATOR

2. The Long Climb

WRITER
JEAN-CHARLES KRAEHN

ARTIST
CHRYS MILLIEN

COLORIST
PATRICIA JAMBERS

(1) SEE VOLUMES 7, 8, AND 9 OF *TRAMP*.
(2) SEE VOLUME 1 OF THIS SERIES, "TAKE-OFF."

THE LONG CLIMB 1920
After our life in Africa, the move to Paris was very difficult. Despite their wealth, my mother's family refused to help her. By marrying a German—and a Protestant, to boot—she'd become a "Kraut," they said. And although she'd taught us to speak French, our strong foreign accents did us no favors.
We arrived at just the right time, however, to witness a legendary feat of flying. Standing in the Place de l'Étoile, I watched in amazement and envy as Charles Godefroy flew his little Nieuport 11, nicknamed "Baby," under the Arc de Triomphe! (1)
Amor ami
Joseph
Souvenir affectueux
Charles Godefroy
Forced to bring up seven children by herself, my mother worked all hours of the day and night as a seamstress in our tiny apartment in the suburbs, which one of her brothers had finally deigned to rent her "out of Christian charity"—and in doing so, he unwittingly drew me toward my destiny.
SINGER
SINGER
Issy-les-Moulineaux was already the Mecca of the aviation world. In 1915, the Caudron brothers had set up two aircraft factories there.
My brother Moses and I—both good mechanics—managed to get taken on as apprentices. It was another small step toward my dream of becoming a pilot.
(1) GODEFROY DID THIS ON AUGUST 7, 1919, AS A PROTEST AGAINST PILOTS HAVING TO MARCH WITH SOLDIERS IN THE PREVIOUS JULY 14 PARADE.

DESTINY MAY BE INESCAPABLE, BUT IT'S SOMETIMES ALSO CAPRICIOUS. AFTER THE WAR, ORDERS FOR MILITARY AIRCRAFT PLUMMETED, AND CAUDRON FOUND ITSELF OVERSTOCKED WITH WOOD. SO IN 1920, IT STARTED MANUFACTURING CARTS AND CARRIAGES.
IT'S JUST MY LUCK TO HAVE TO SWITCH FROM MAKING C.23 BIPLANES TO BUILDING BORING BOXES ON WHEELS.
APPAREILS D'AVIATION
CAUDRON FRERES
WHAT DO YOU CARE?
THE PAY'S TERRIBLE EITHER WAY.
IT'S IMPORTANT FOR A PILOT TO KNOW HOW AIRPLANES ARE PUT TOGETHER.
I WON'T LEARN ANY--
HEY, HUN!
!?
WE'LL BUY YOU A GREEN FAIRY (1) AT MOUNETTE'S! C'MON!

(1) ABSINTHE.

WHO ARE THESE JERKS?
OH... Y'KNOW, JUST SOME FRIENDS I MADE...
...DANCING THE OTHER NIGHT.
DANCING? WHERE?
THE CLUB!

AND YOU LET THEM CALL YOU "HUN"?
THEY'RE HARMLESS, JOSEF. THEY'RE ONLY KIDDING.
HEEEY, HUN! SOMETIME TODAY WOULD BE GOOD!

MOSES, MAN! YOU DON'T WANT TO KEEP ROSA WAITING, DO YOU?!
ROSA'S THERE?
READY AND WAITING! SHE'S GOT THE HOTS FOR YOU, HUN!
YEAH?
YOU BETCHA!

WHO'S THIS?
JOSEF, MY BIG BROTHER. HE'S LIKE THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY!

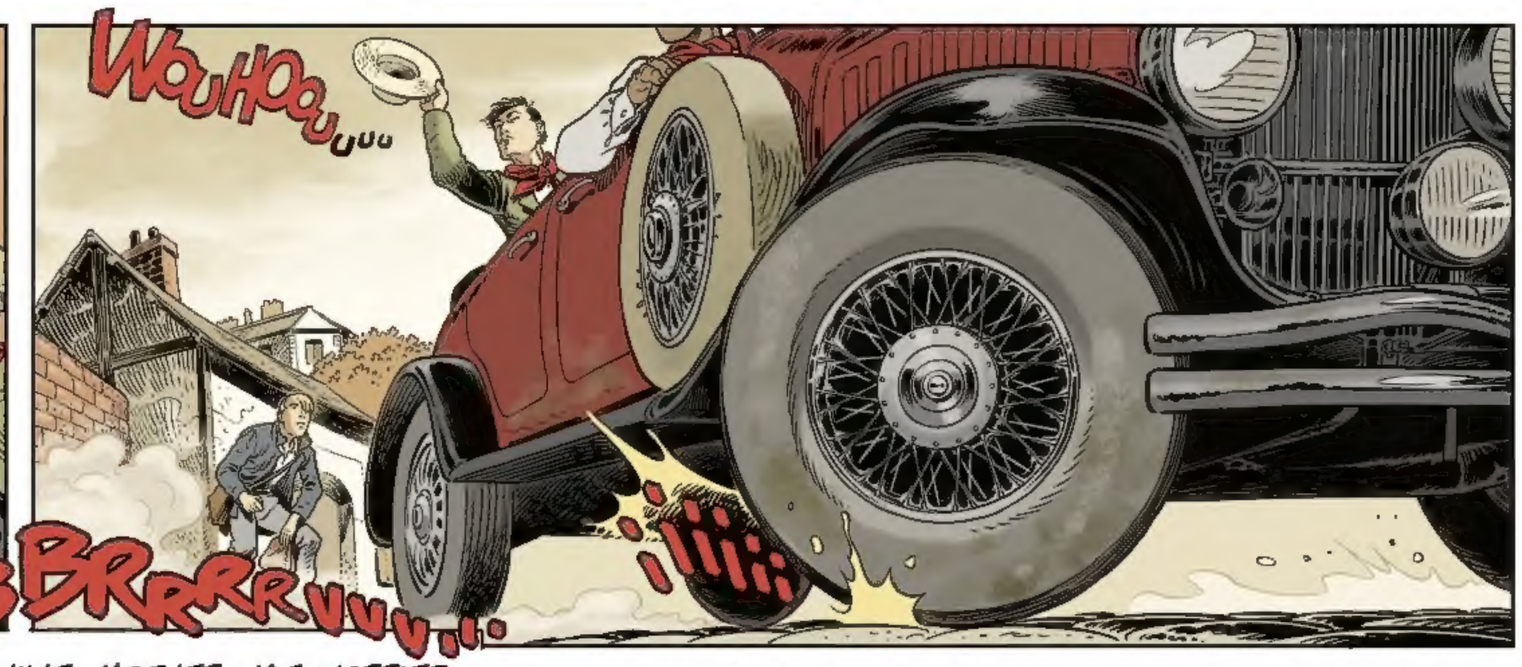
OOH! HEAD OF THE FAMILY?! YOUR HIGHNESS!
?

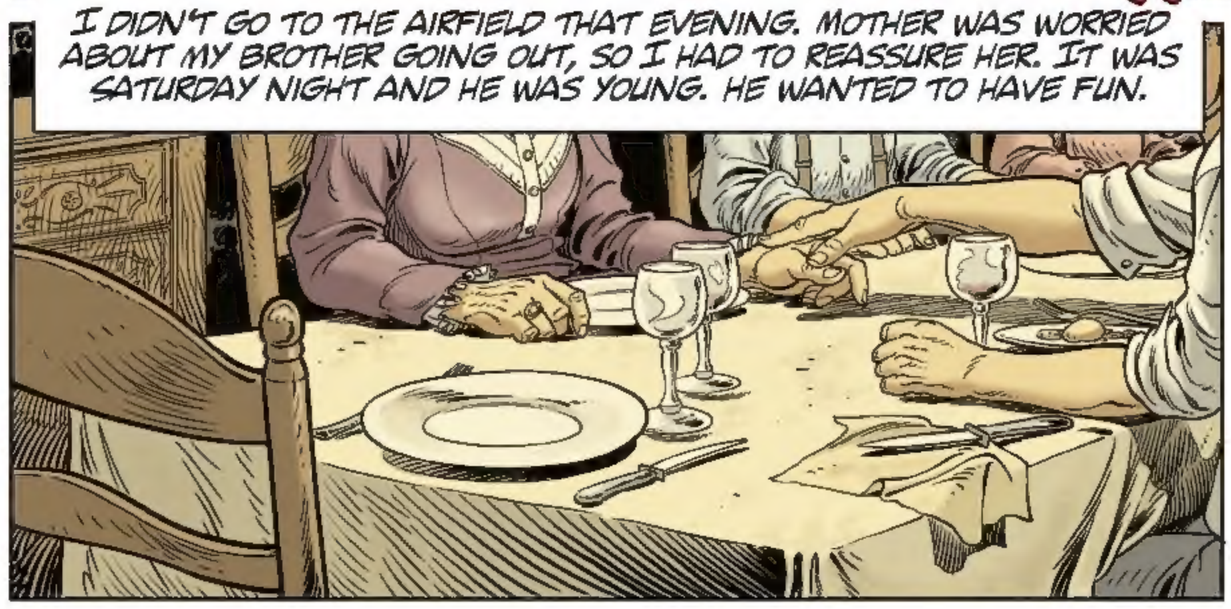
YOU COMIN' TOO, BIG BRO?
HEH... NO, EUSTACHE. JOSEF'LL BE GOING ALONG TO THE AIRFIELD, LIKE HE DOES EVERY EVENING.

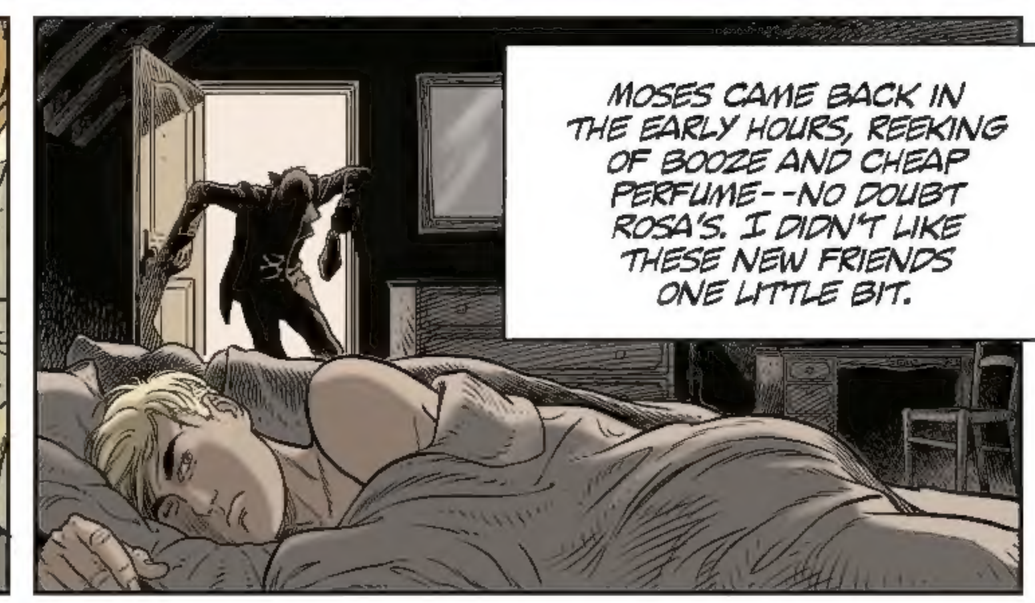
HE CAN ALREADY FLY, Y'KNOW!
KUF
KUF

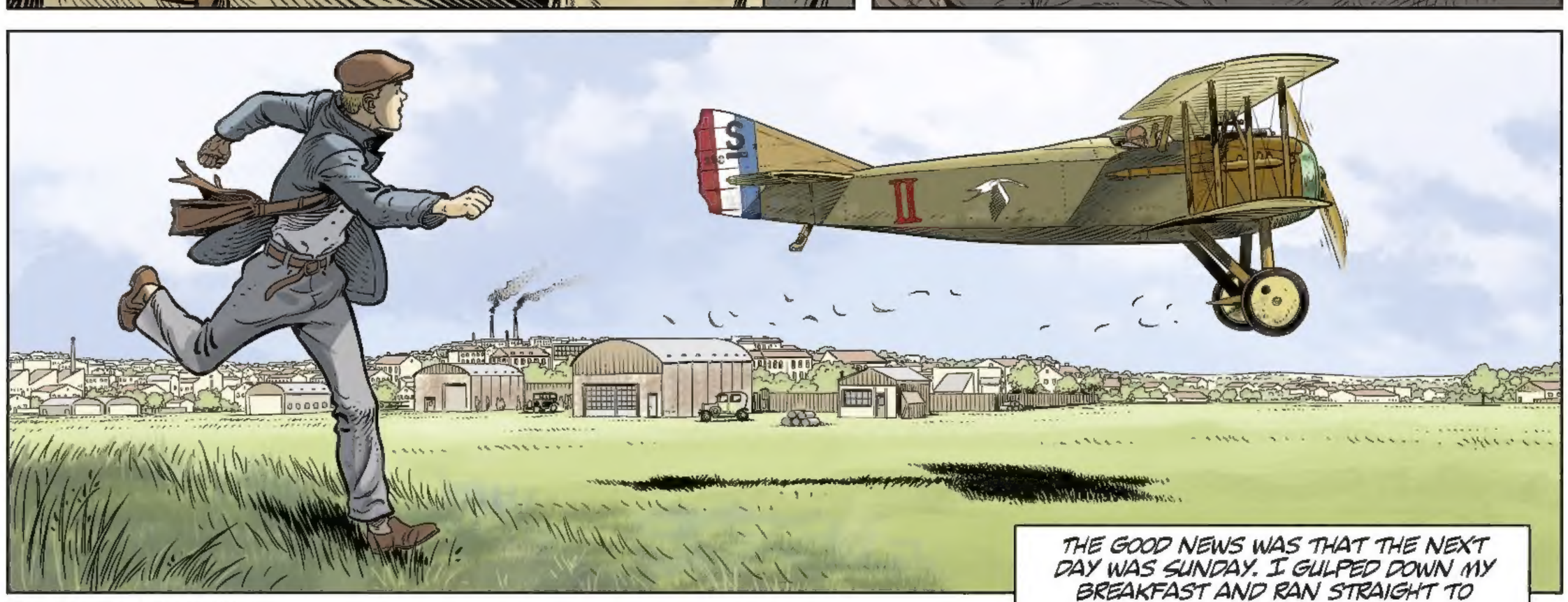
HE CAN ALREADY FLY?!
WAHOOO!
BOW DOWN, BOYS! WE HAVE IN OUR MIDST A GENUINE WAR HERO!
?

OK, MR. NIGHTCLUB NANCY BOY, I'VE HAD ENOUGH NOW!
?

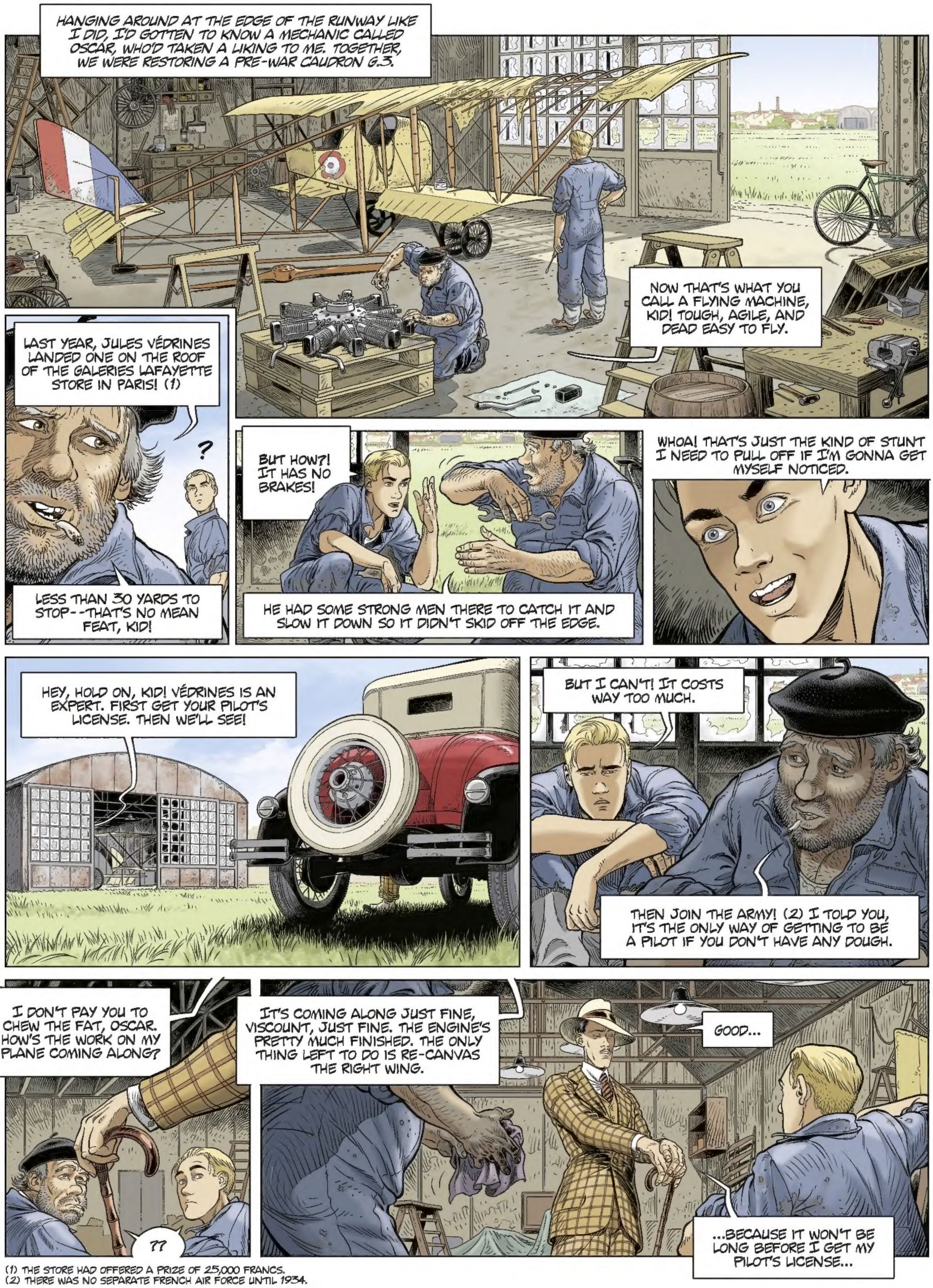








(1) SLANG FOR A FLICK-KNIFE.

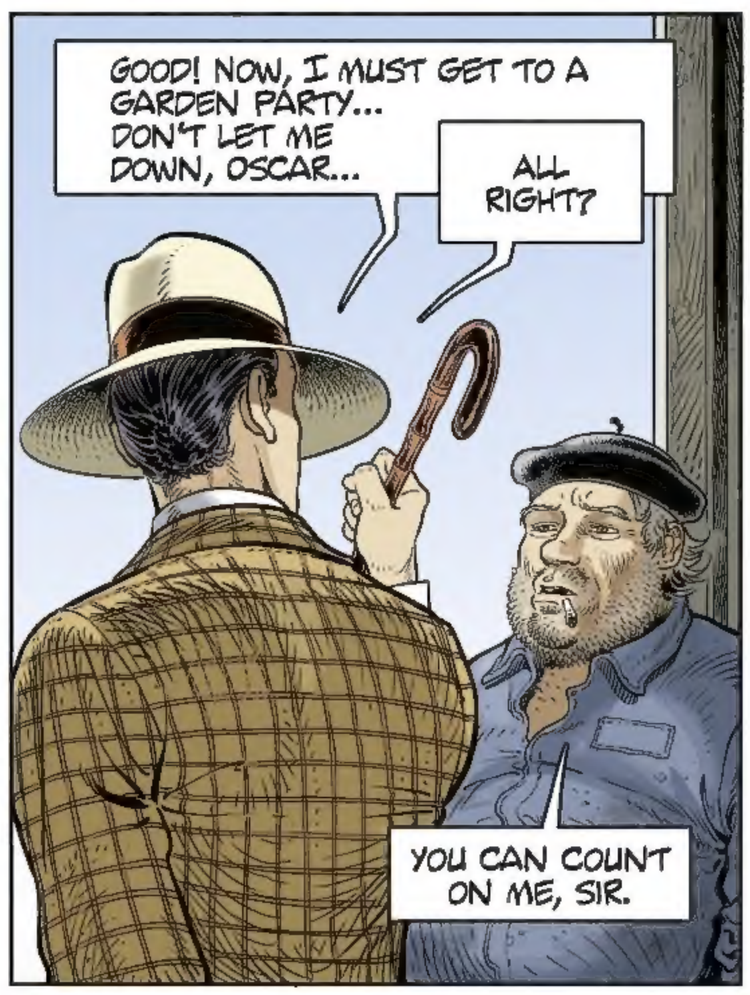


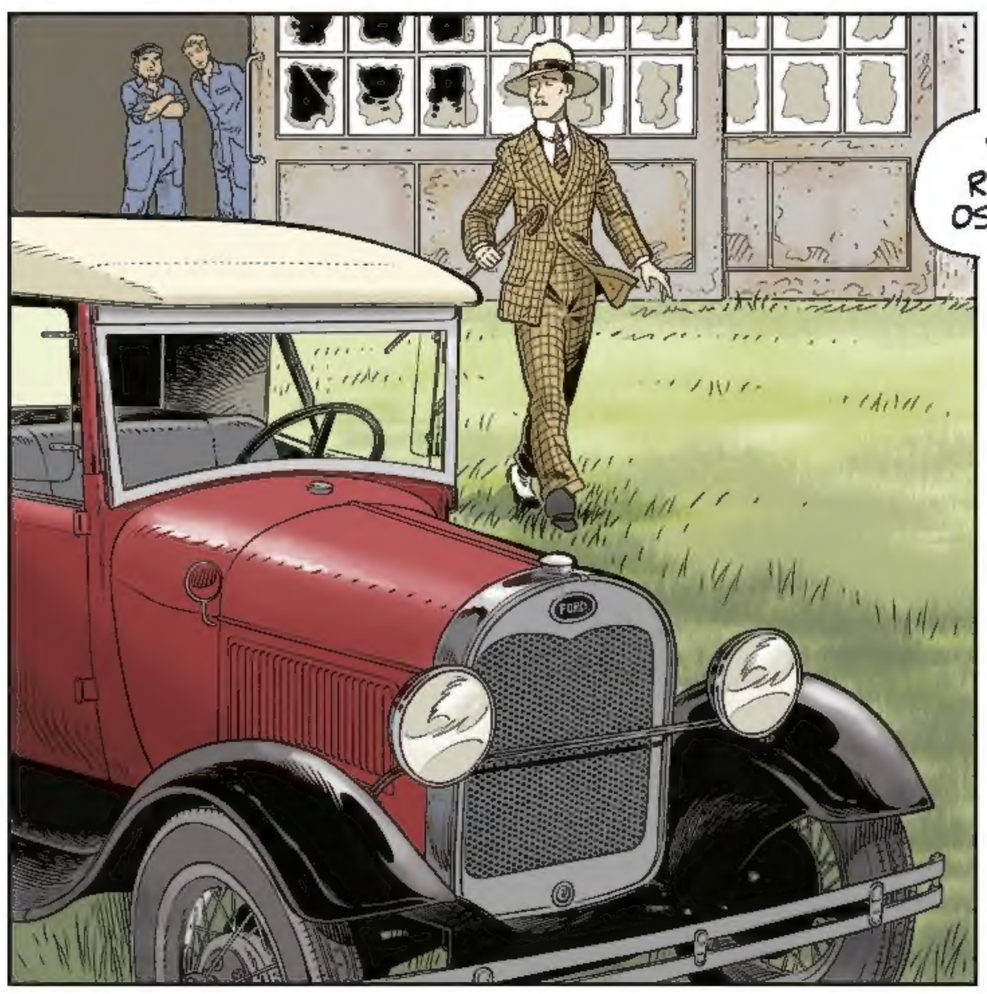
(1) THE STORE HAD OFFERED A PRIZE OF 25,000 FRANCS.
(2) THERE WAS NO SEPARATE FRENCH AIR FORCE UNTIL 1934.

...AND I WANT TO START FLYING IT IMMEDIATELY. ALL RIGHT, OSCAR?
THE PLANE WILL BE READY, VISCOUNT.

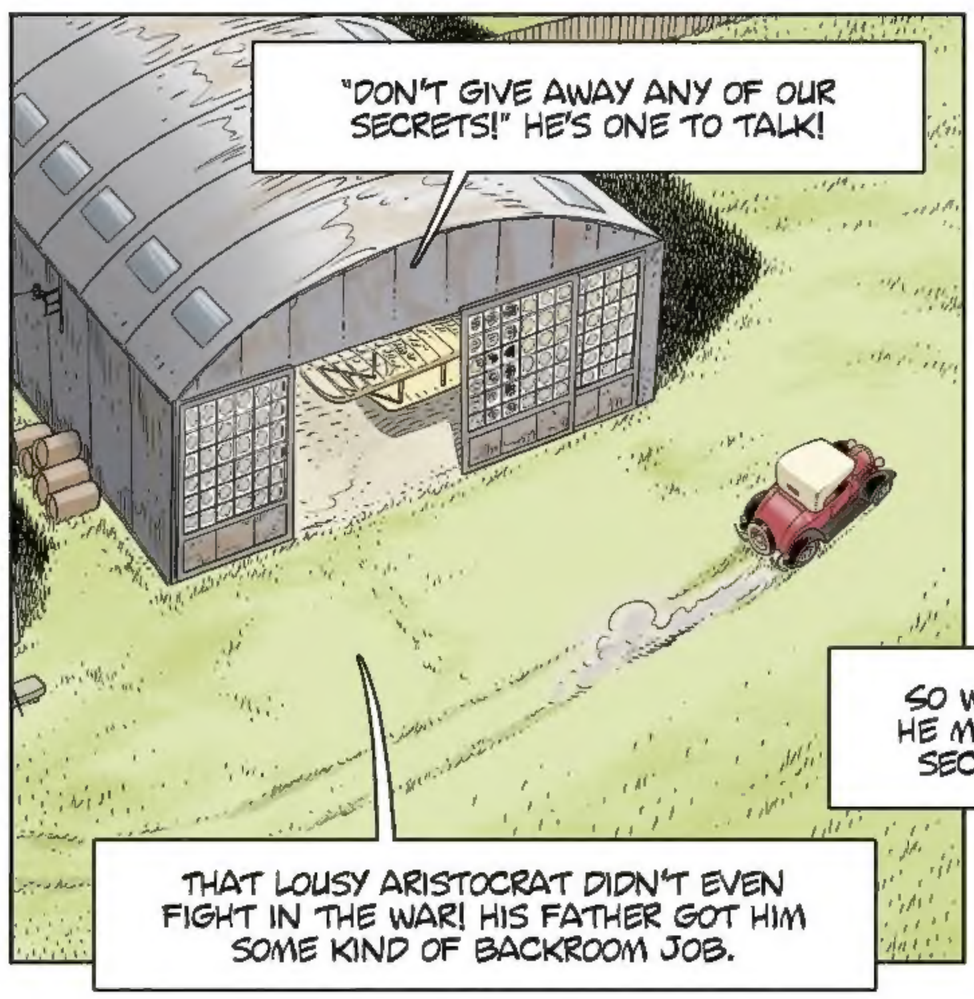
GOOD! AND WHO IS THIS... PERSON WITH THE DREADFUL ACCENT?
HE'S MY APPRENTICE, VISCOUNT. HE'S A GOOD KID, HE IS.
MY FATHER WAS FROM ALSACE.

OH? A KRAUT, THEN!
DON'T GIVE AWAY ANY OF OUR SECRETS! ALL RIGHT, OSCAR?


GOOD! NOW, I MUST GET TO A GARDEN PARTY... DON'T LET ME DOWN, OSCAR...
ALL RIGHT?
YOU CAN COUNT ON ME, SIR.


"ALL RIGHT, OSCAR?"

"ALL RIGHT, SIR!"
"YES, MR. VISCOUNT, SIR!"
PFFFFFF...

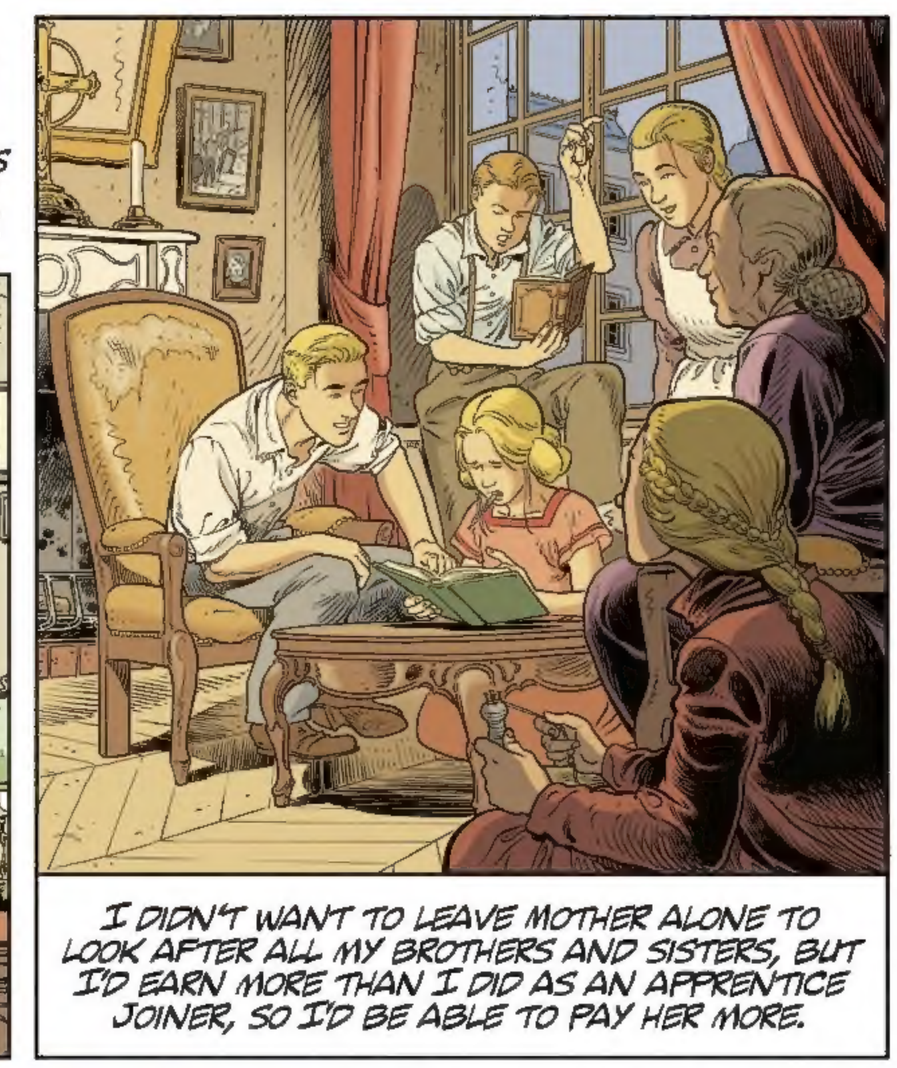

"DON'T GIVE AWAY ANY OF OUR SECRETS!" HE'S ONE TO TALK!
THAT LOUSY ARISTOCRAT DIDN'T EVEN FIGHT IN THE WAR! HIS FATHER GOT HIM SOME KIND OF BACKROOM JOB.

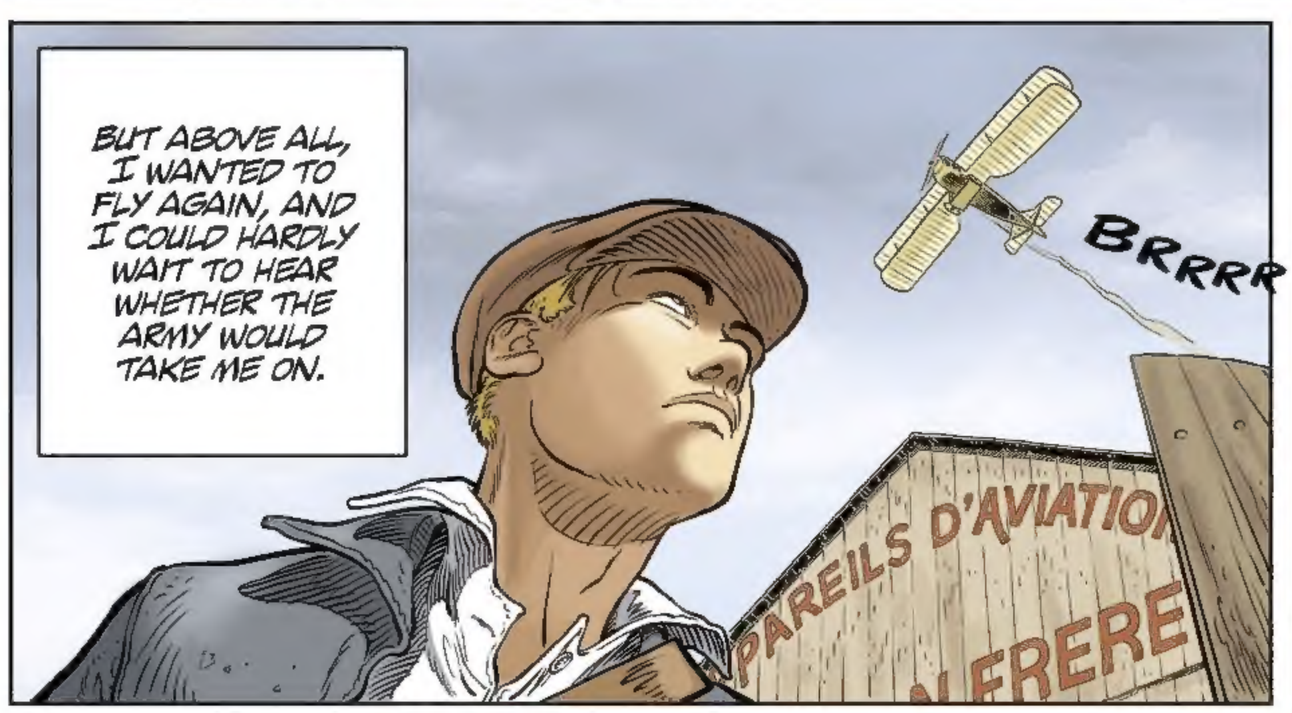
SO WHY DID HE MENTION SECRETS?
BECAUSE HE ASKED ME TO FIT THIS OLD THING WITH THE LATEST ANEMOMETER. WHAT A JOKE!

THAT DANDY JUST WANTS TO SHOW OFF, BUT HE'S ALREADY FAILED HIS TEST TWICE. HE'LL NEVER PASS. HIS INSTRUCTOR TOLD ME HE SHITS HIMSELF EVERY TIME HE GOES UP!

BOTH MOSES AND I GAVE ALMOST EVERYTHING WE EARNED TO MOTHER TO HELP PAY FOR ALL THE THINGS THE FAMILY NEEDED.

WITH ONLY A FEW CENTS LEFT OVER, I HAD NO HOPE OF PUTTING ASIDE ENOUGH TO PAY FOR MY PILOT'S LICENSE. SO I FINALLY TOOK OSCAR'S ADVICE AND APPLIED FOR A POST IN THE AVIATION DIVISION OF THE ARMY.


I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE MOTHER ALONE TO LOOK AFTER ALL MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, BUT I'D EARN MORE THAN I DID AS AN APPRENTICE JOINER, SO I'D BE ABLE TO PAY HER MORE.


BUT ABOVE ALL, I WANTED TO FLY AGAIN, AND I COULD HARDLY WAIT TO HEAR WHETHER THE ARMY WOULD TAKE ME ON.
BRRRR
PAREILS D'AVIATIO
FRERE

MEANWHILE, MOSES'S BEHAVIOR WAS GETTING WORSE, AND I WAS WORRIED ABOUT LEAVING HIM. MOTHER COULDN'T CONTROL HIM ANYMORE.

TAKE ME TO A REAL RESTAURANT ON SATURDAY, HM, CARISSIMO?
I WILL, ROSA!
CIAO!

YOU DON'T KISS A GIRL ON THE LIPS IN PUBLIC, MOSES! THAT'S NO WAY TO BEHAVE! DIDN'T YOU SEE, THAT LADY WAS SHOCKED!
?!

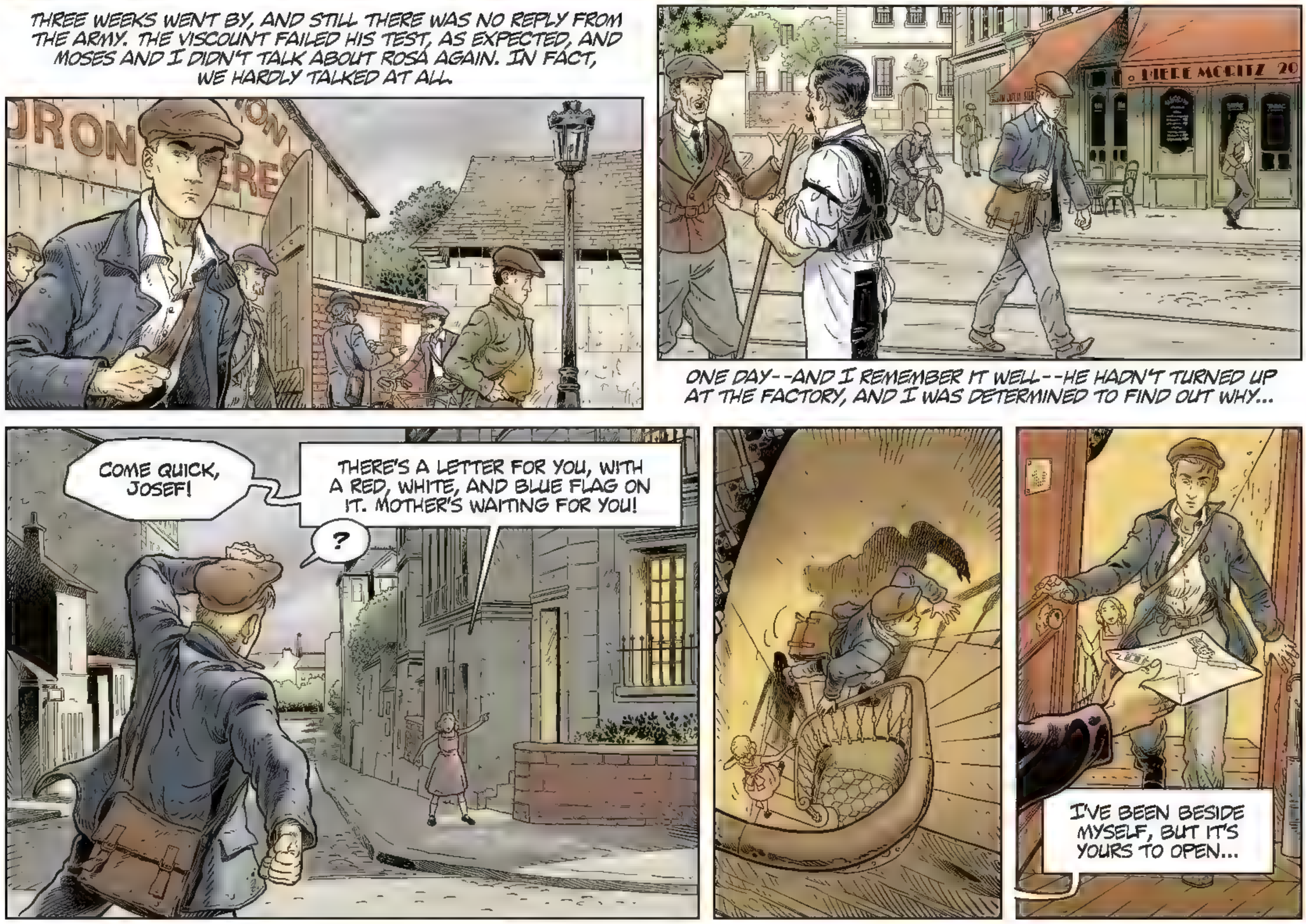
TOO BAD FOR HER.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE, ANYHOW? SPYING ON ME...?
I WAS AT THE AIRFIELD.

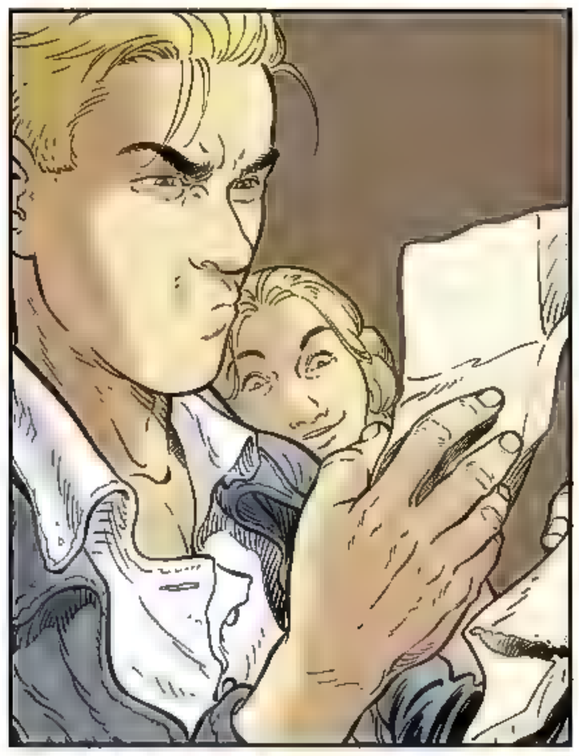
SHE'S NOT THE RIGHT GIRL FOR YOU, MOSES. SHE'S A TART AND SHE'LL BLEED YOU DRY. SHE'LL ONLY MAKE YOU UNHAPPY.
IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, JOSEF!

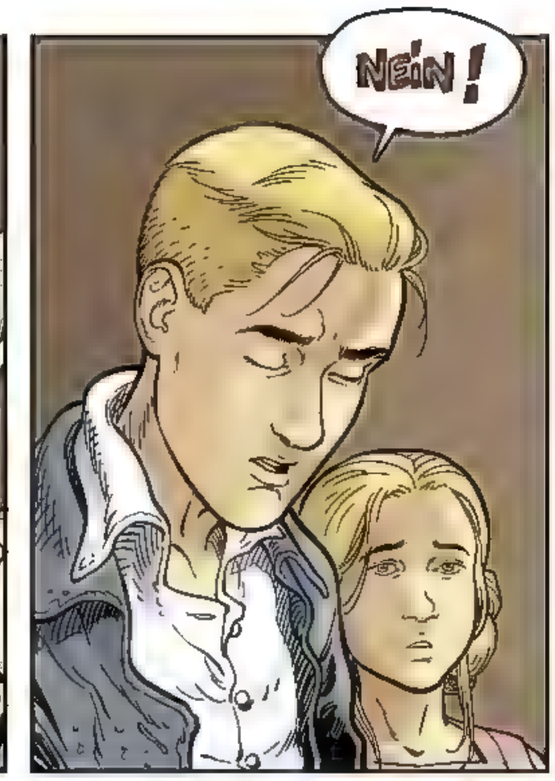
DO I TELL YOU WHAT TO DO? I SUPPOSE YOU THINK MOTHER'S HAPPY ABOUT YOU GOING OFF TO JOIN THE ARMY? THE FRENCH ARMY, TOO!
WE'RE HALF FRENCH, IN CASE YOU'D FORGOTTEN!

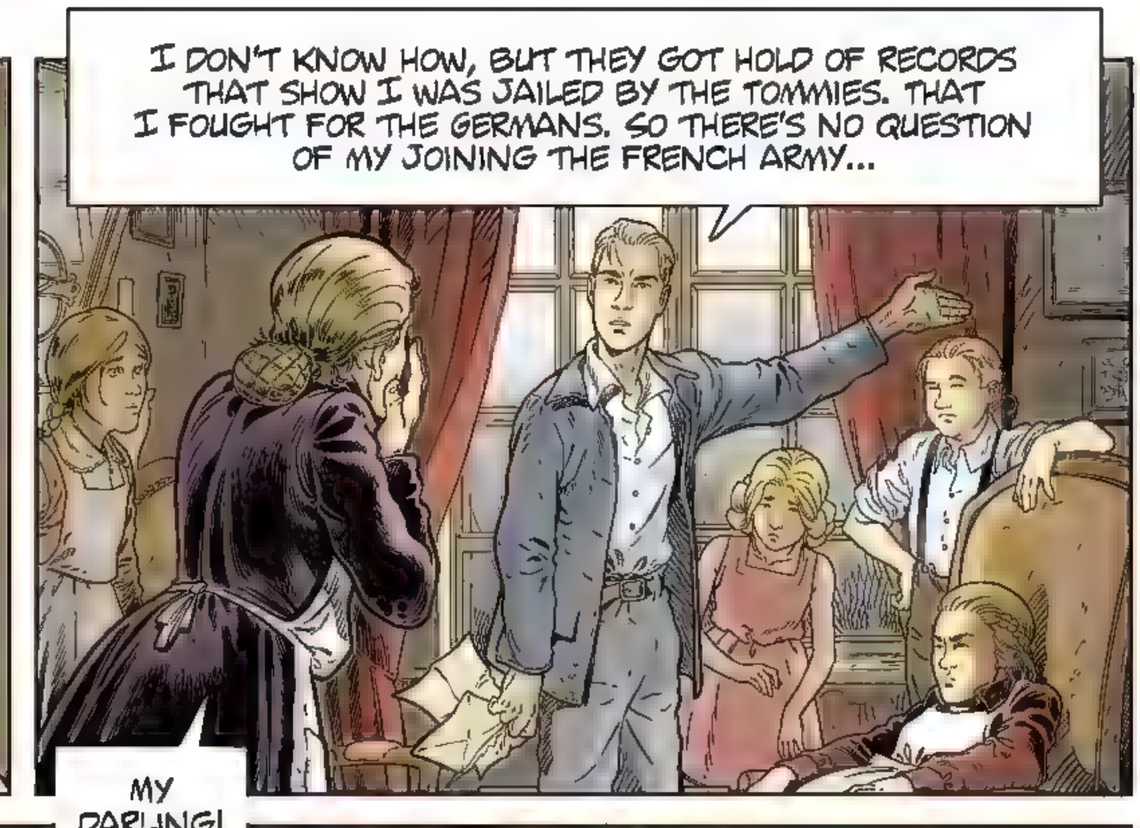
AND AT LEAST I WON'T MIX WITH THE WRONG PEOPLE...
...UNLIKE YOU, WITH YOUR PIMP PALS. YOU'RE NOT STILL SEEING THEM?

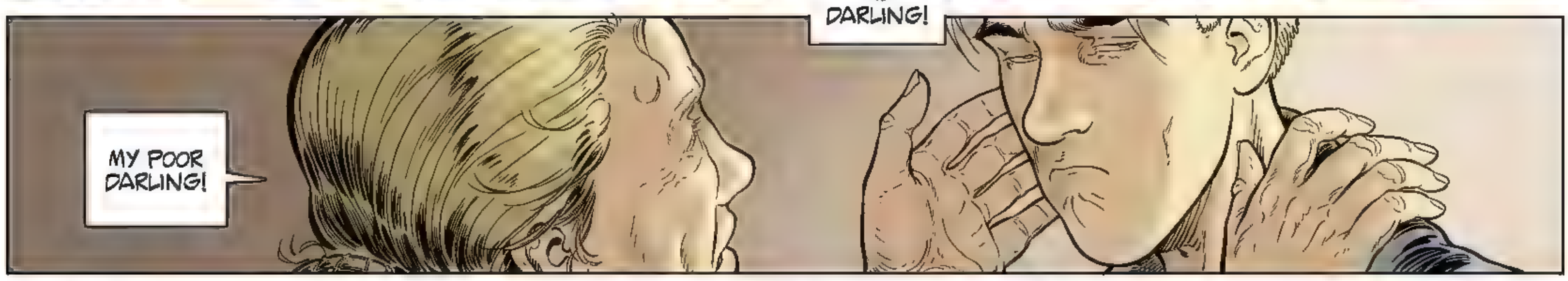
?!!
TRUT
I'LL SEE WHO I WANT, JOSEF!
I'M GROWN-UP AND YOU'RE NOT MY FATHER!
SO LEAVE ME ALONE!
!?

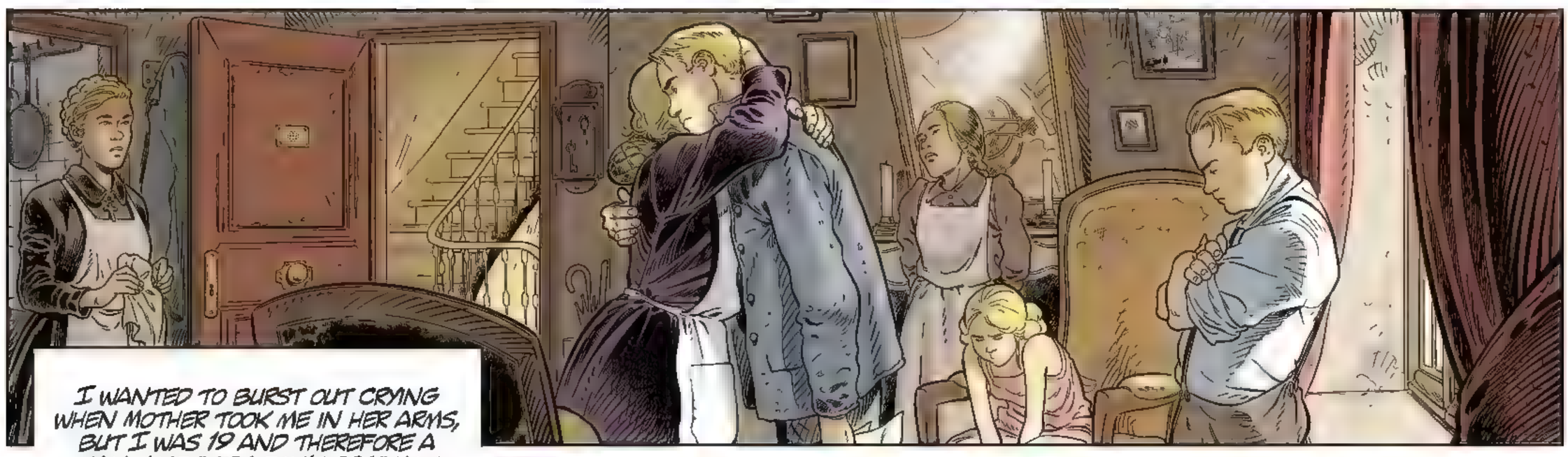

THREE WEEKS WENT BY, AND STILL THERE WAS NO REPLY FROM THE ARMY. THE VISCOUNT FAILED HIS TEST, AS EXPECTED, AND MOSES AND I DIDN'T TALK ABOUT ROSA AGAIN. IN FACT, WE HARDLY TALKED AT ALL.
PIERRE MORITZ 20
ONE DAY--AND I REMEMBER IT WELL--HE HADN'T TURNED UP AT THE FACTORY, AND I WAS DETERMINED TO FIND OUT WHY...
COME QUICK, JOSEF!
THERE'S A LETTER FOR YOU, WITH A RED, WHITE, AND BLUE FLAG ON IT. MOTHER'S WAITING FOR YOU!
?
I'VE BEEN BESIDE MYSELF, BUT IT'S YOURS TO OPEN...

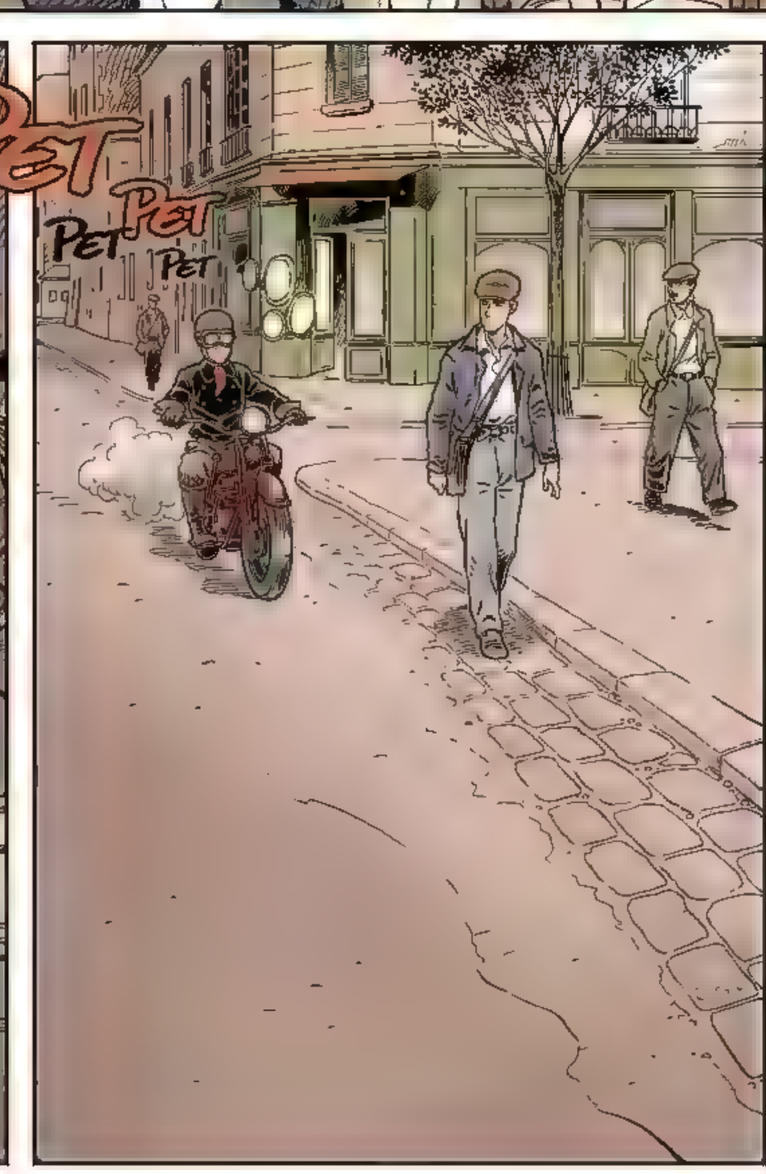



NEIN!

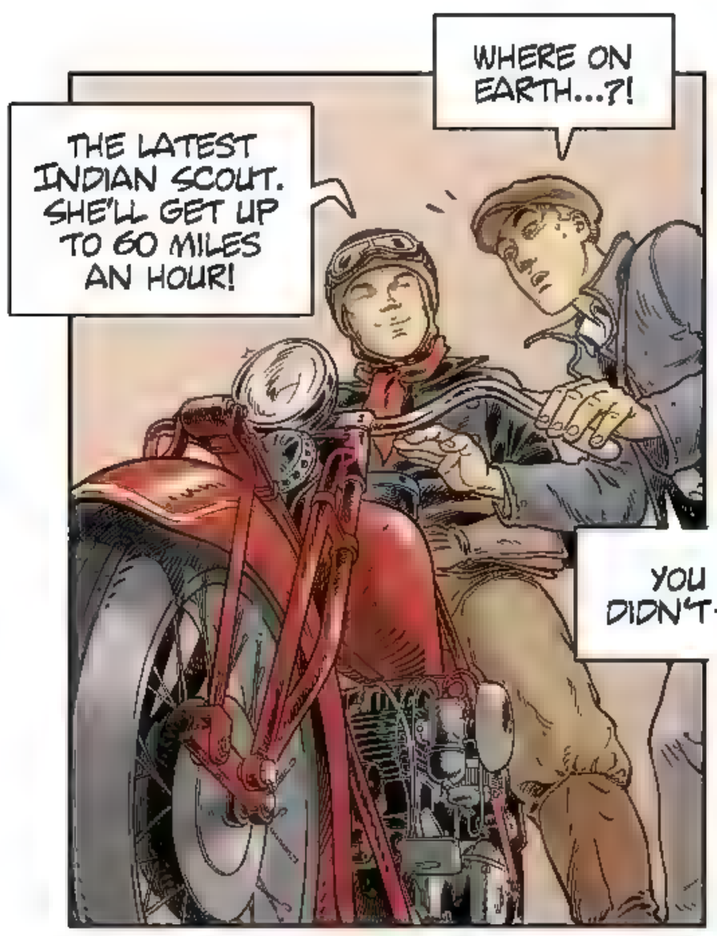

I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT THEY GOT HOLD OF RECORDS THAT SHOW I WAS JAILED BY THE TOMMIES. THAT I FOUGHT FOR THE GERMANS. SO THERE'S NO QUESTION OF MY JOINING THE FRENCH ARMY...
MY DARLING!

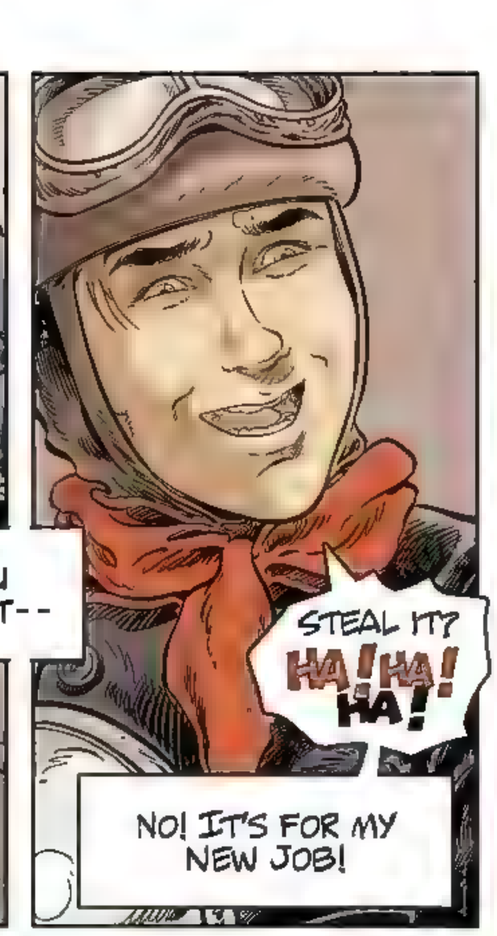

MY POOR DARLING!

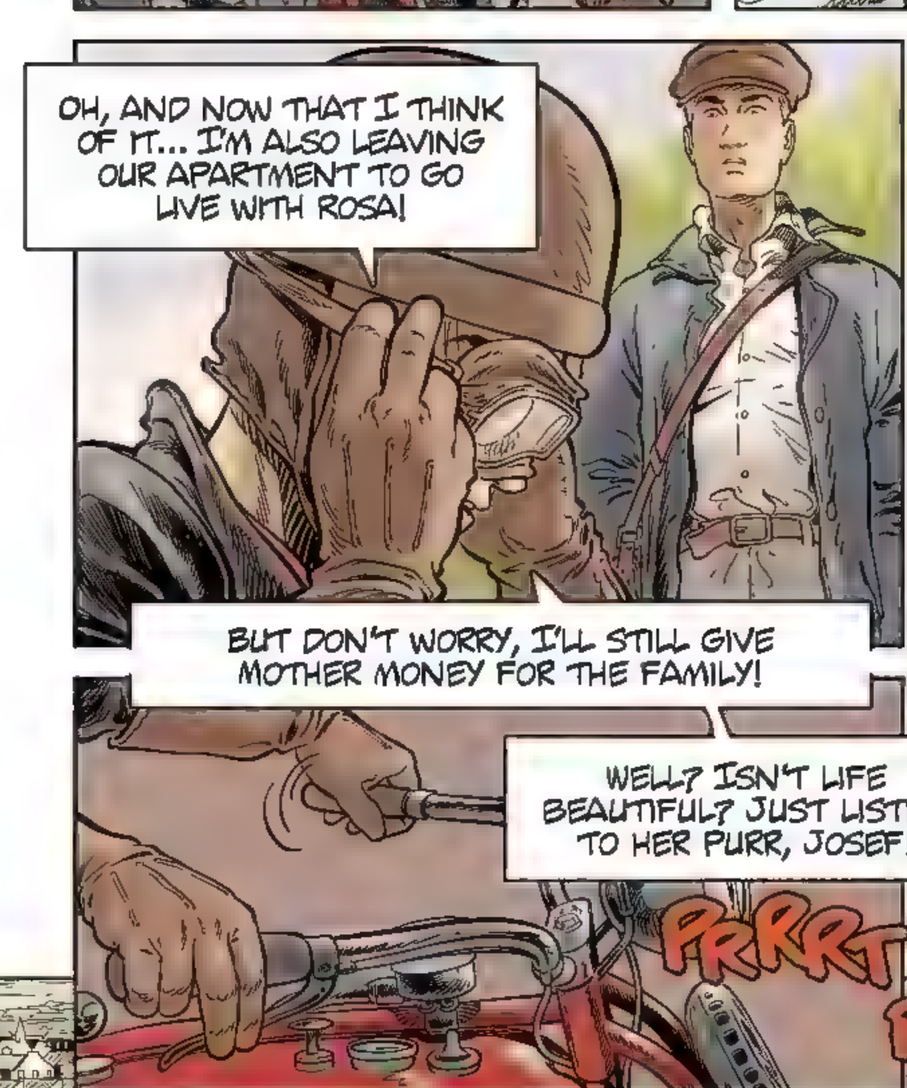

I WANTED TO BURST OUT CRYING WHEN MOTHER TOOK ME IN HER ARMS, BUT I WAS 19 AND THEREFORE A MAN, AND "MEN DON'T CRY." HOW MANY TIMES HAD I HEARD MY FATHER TROT OUT THAT LITTLE DICTUM?


PET
PET
PET
PET

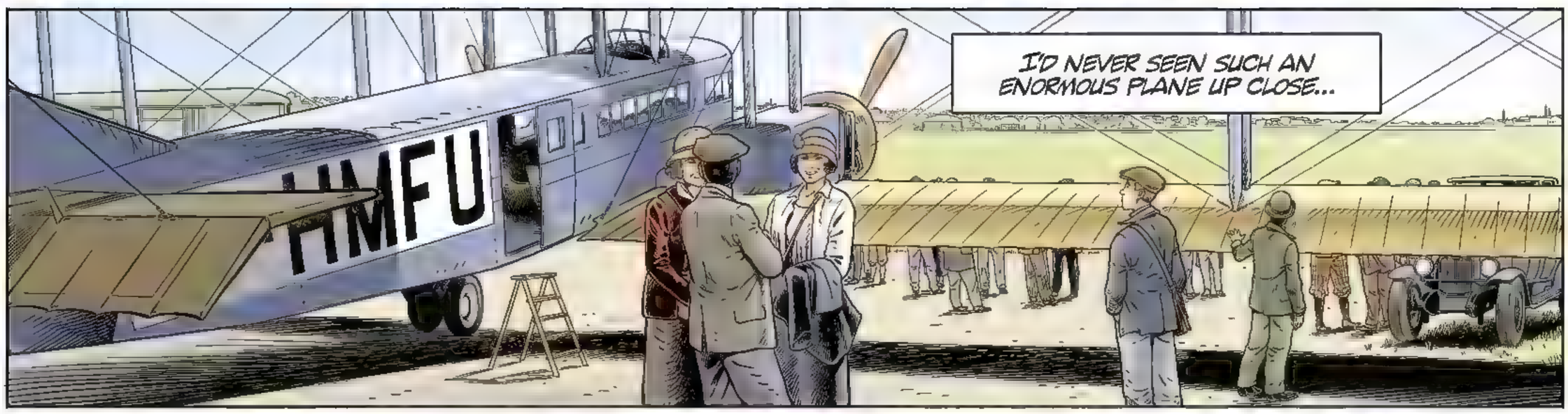
WHADDYA THINK, JOSEF?
MOSES?!

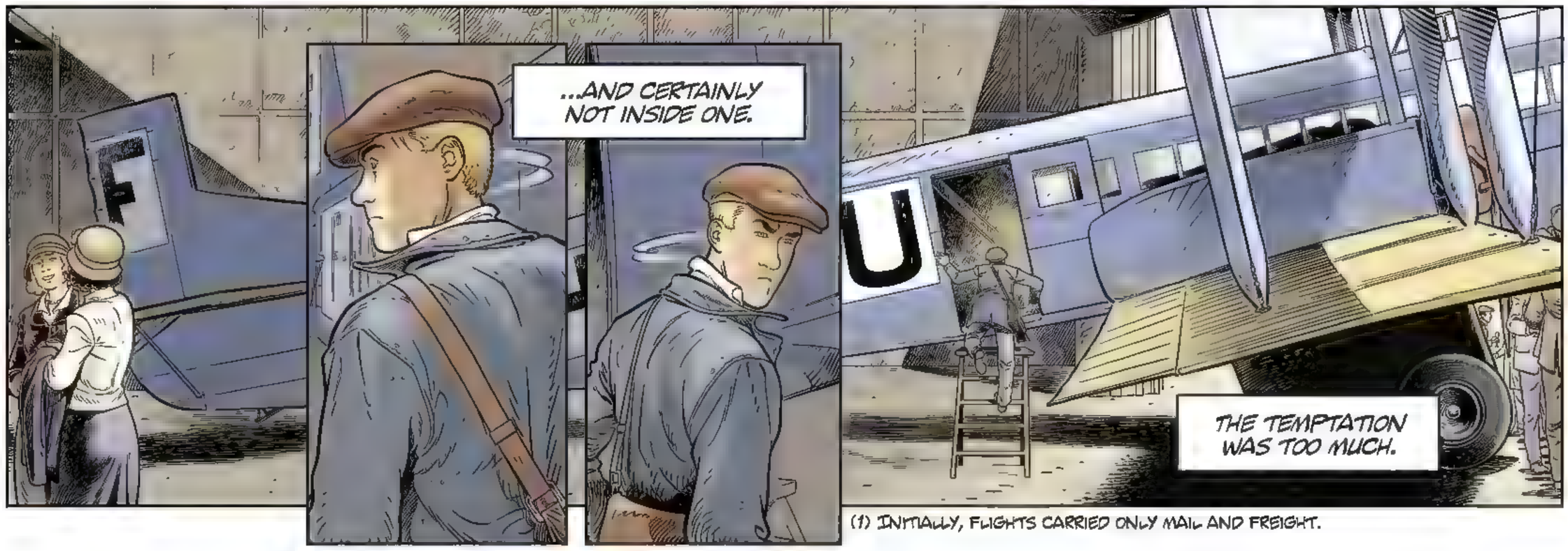




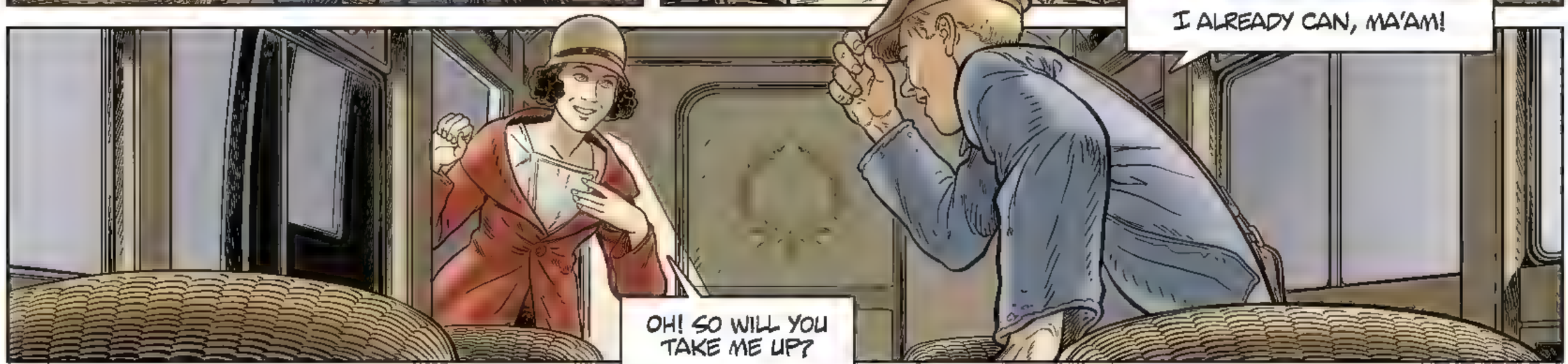


IF I WANTED TO BE A PILOT, I HAD TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE AND TAKE ACTION. SO I TURNED AWAY FROM THE FACTORY AND HEADED TOWARD THE AIRFIELD.





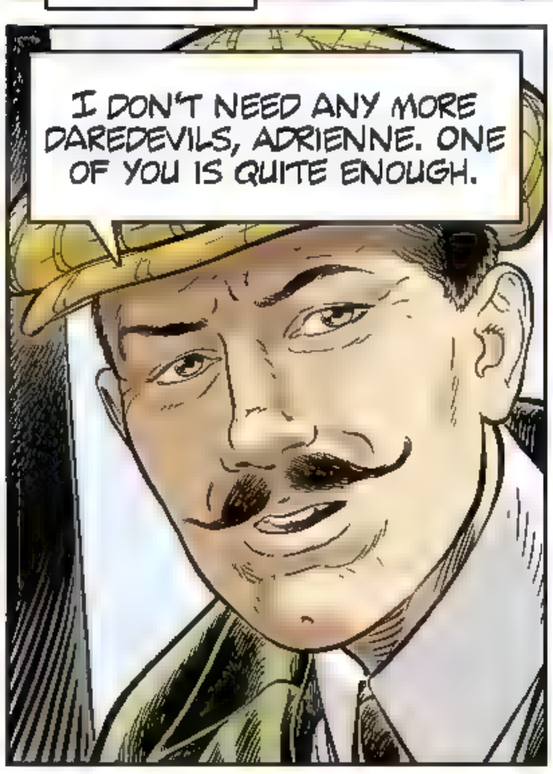
(1) INITIALLY, FLIGHTS CARRIED ONLY MAIL AND FREIGHT.



(1) FRANCE'S FIRST FEMALE PILOT, BOLLAND EARNED HER OWN CAUDRON PLANE FOR THE STUNT.

ADRIENNE, THE PHOTOGRAPHERS ARE WAITING!
LET THEM WAIT!
ADRIENNE BOLL--
YOU'RE...

RENÉ! THIS CHARMING YOUNG MAN SAYS HE CAN FLY, BUT HE HAS NO LICENSE AND CAN'T SCRAPE TOGETHER ENOUGH TO GET ONE.
?
IF HE DOES THREE LOOP-THE-LOOPS, YOUR SCHOOL WILL GIVE HIM FREE LESSONS, WON'T IT?
THREE??

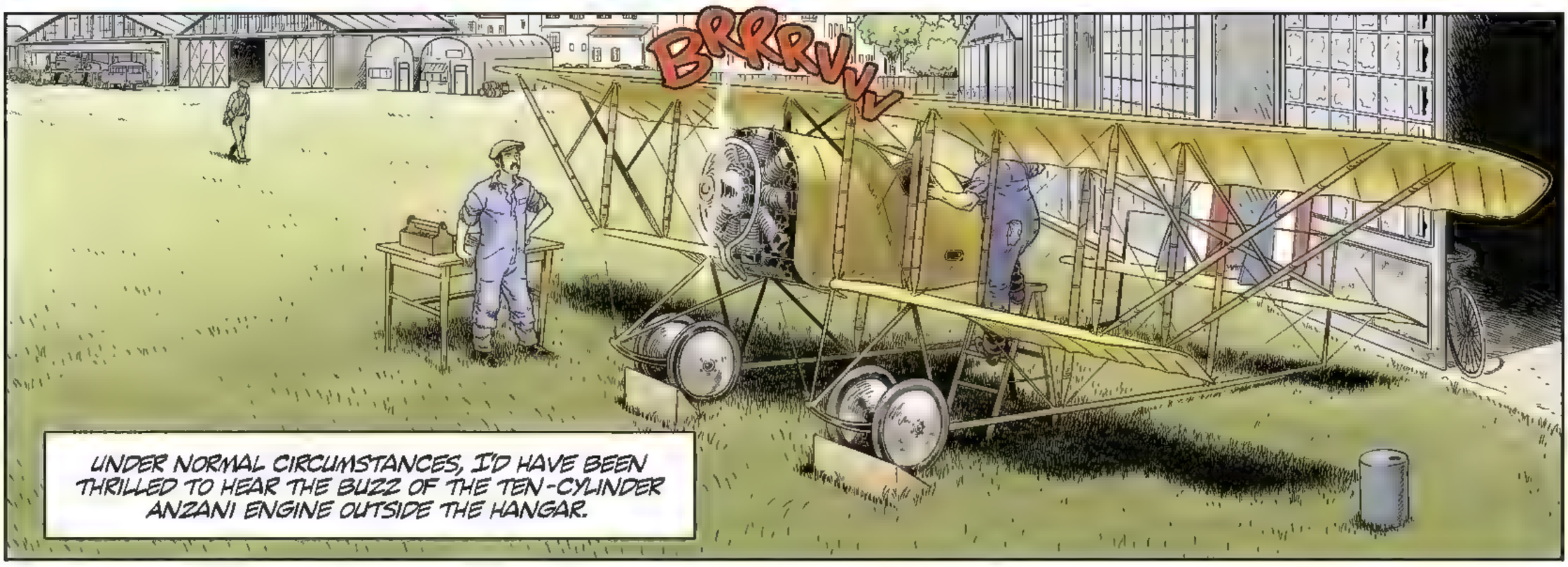

I DON'T NEED ANY MORE DAREDEVILS, ADRIENNE. ONE OF YOU IS QUITE ENOUGH.

AS FOR YOU, YOUNG MAN, I DON'T WANT TO DISCOURAGE YOU, BUT NOW THAT THE WAR'S OVER, PILOTS ARE TWO-A-PENNY. THERE SIMPLY AREN'T ENOUGH FLYING JOBS TO GO AROUND.

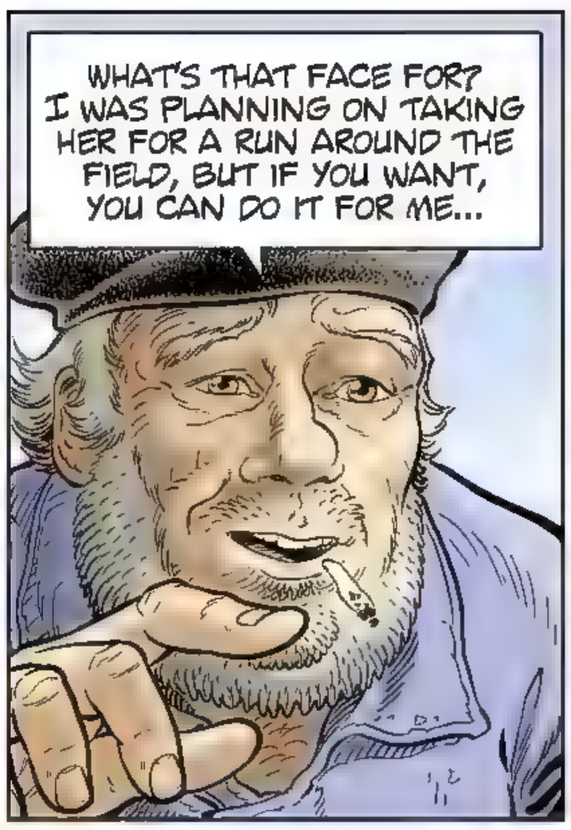
ALL I CAN DO, I'M AFRAID, IS WISH YOU THE BEST OF LUCK!
DO HURRY UP, ADRIENNE. THEY'RE ALL WAITING!

JOSEF! I SACRIFICED EVERYTHING FOR MY PASSION. IF YOU WANT IT ENOUGH...

TWO-A-PENNY! THOSE WORDS WERE THE LAST STRAW, THE DEATH KNELL FOR MY DREAMS.

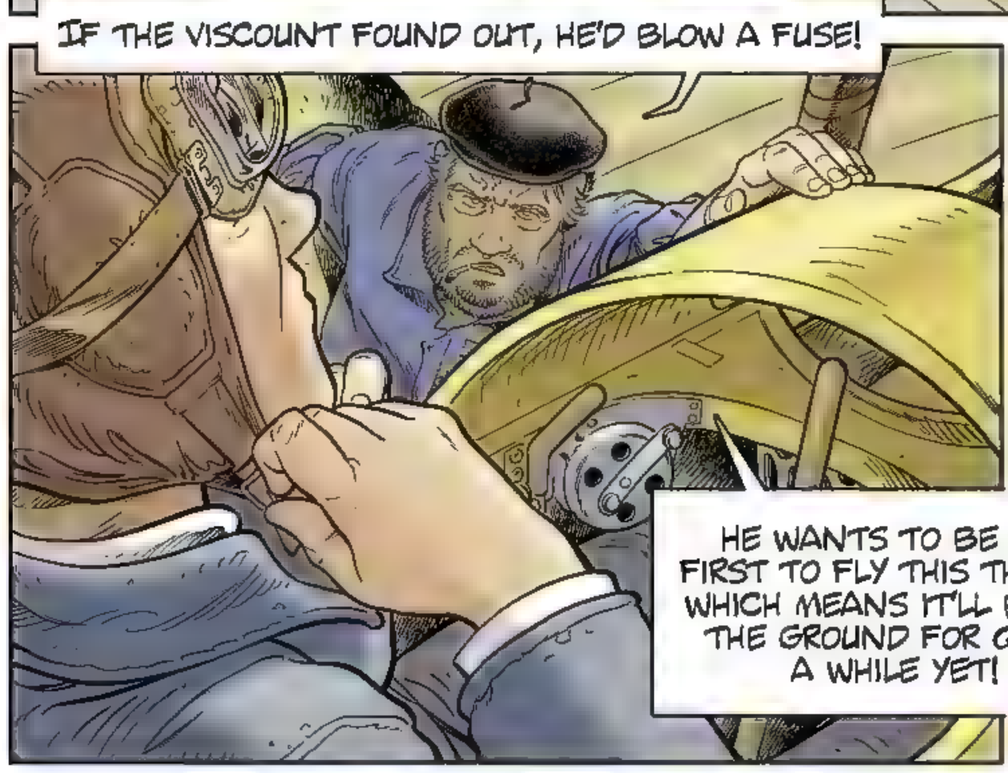

BRRRVVV
UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, I'D HAVE BEEN THRILLED TO HEAR THE BUZZ OF THE TEN-CYLINDER ANZANI ENGINE OUTSIDE THE HANGAR.

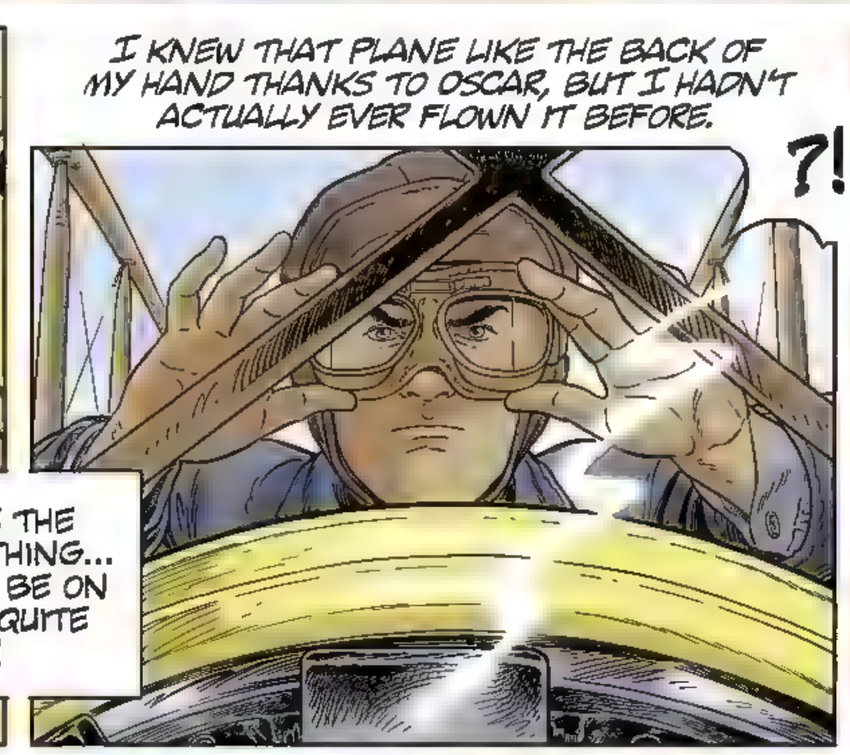
RIGHT NOW, I WAS ASTONISHED. WHY WAS THE G.3 OUTSIDE?
JOSEF?!
NOT PLANING PLANKS TODAY?
NO!

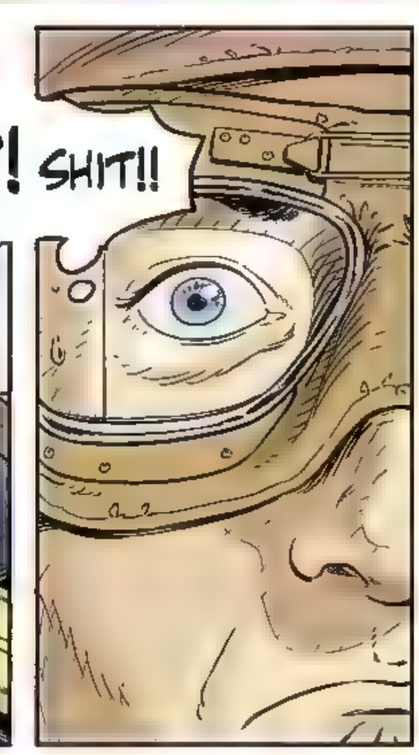

WHAT'S THAT FACE FOR? I WAS PLANNING ON TAKING HER FOR A RUN AROUND THE FIELD, BUT IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN DO IT FOR ME...

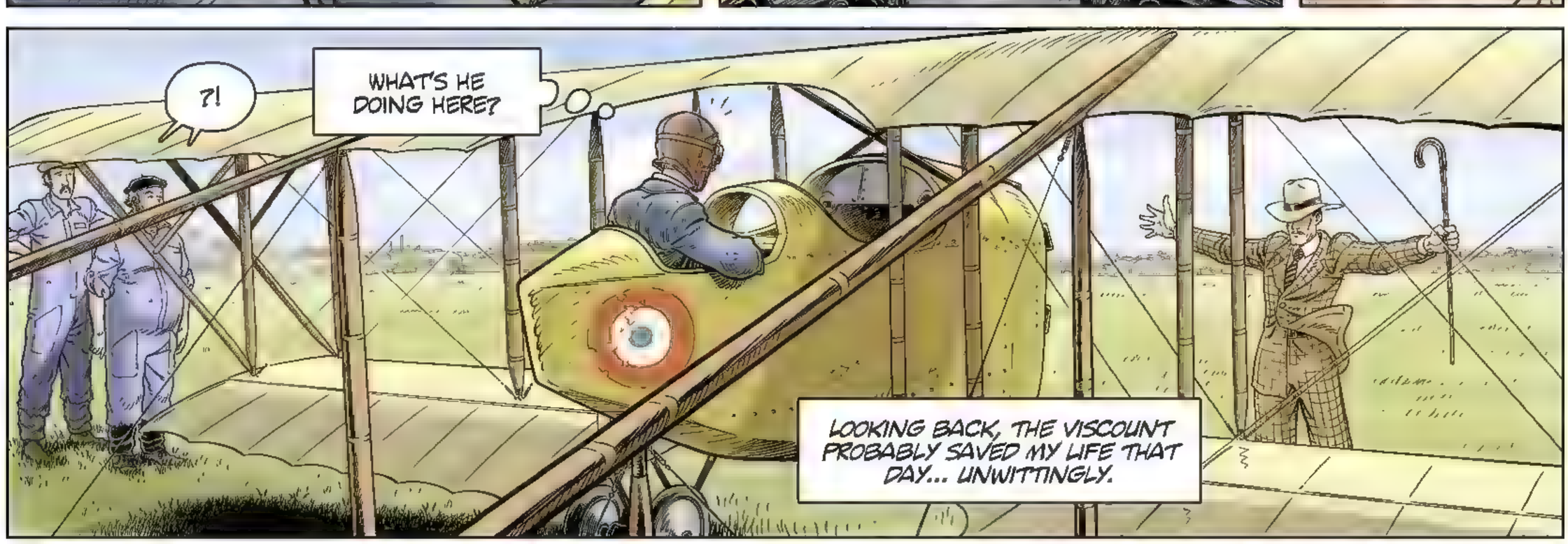
WAS FATE GIVING ME A SIGN? I'D ALREADY STOPPED LISTENING. STILL UPSET, I'D MADE UP MY MIND.
BUT LISTEN, JOSEF! JUST A FEW GENTLE MOVEMENTS TO CHECK THAT THE RUDDER AND THE AILERONS ARE WORKING, OK?

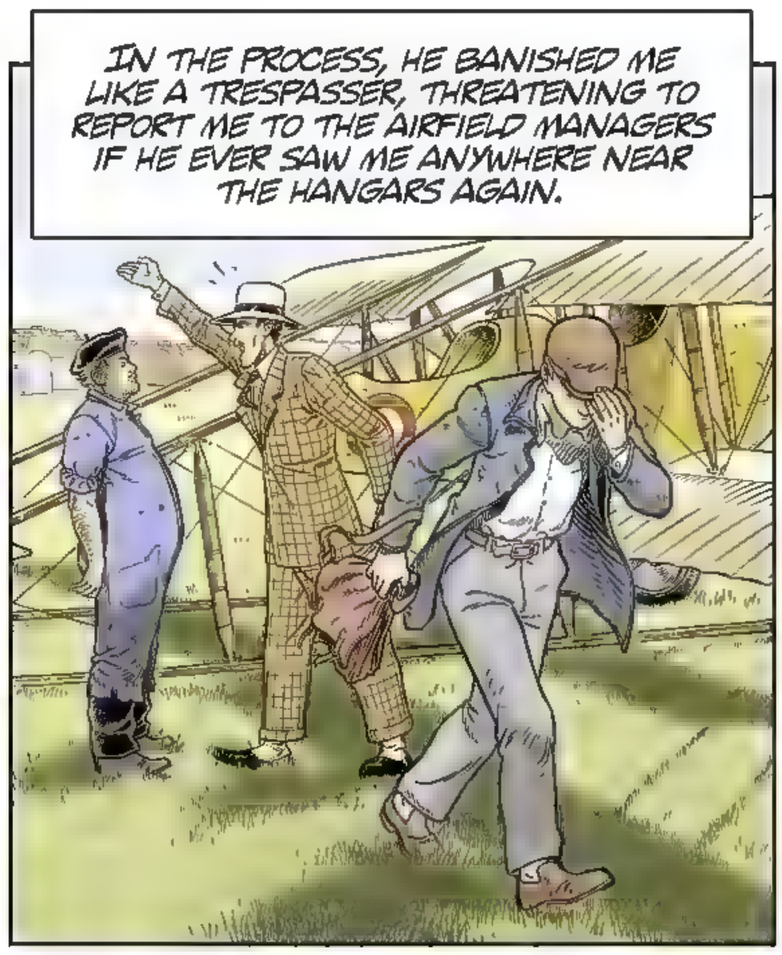
I'D DO FOUR, FIVE, SIX LOOP-THE-LOOPS, ONE AFTER THE OTHER-- AS MANY AS I COULD, UNTIL SOMEONE NOTICED... IF NOT MR. CAUDRON, THEN SOMEONE ELSE... ANYONE!!
RUN HER OVER THERE, THEN BACK THIS WAY, LIFTING THE TAIL A LITTLE.
BUT NO TAKING OFF, YOU HEAR ME?

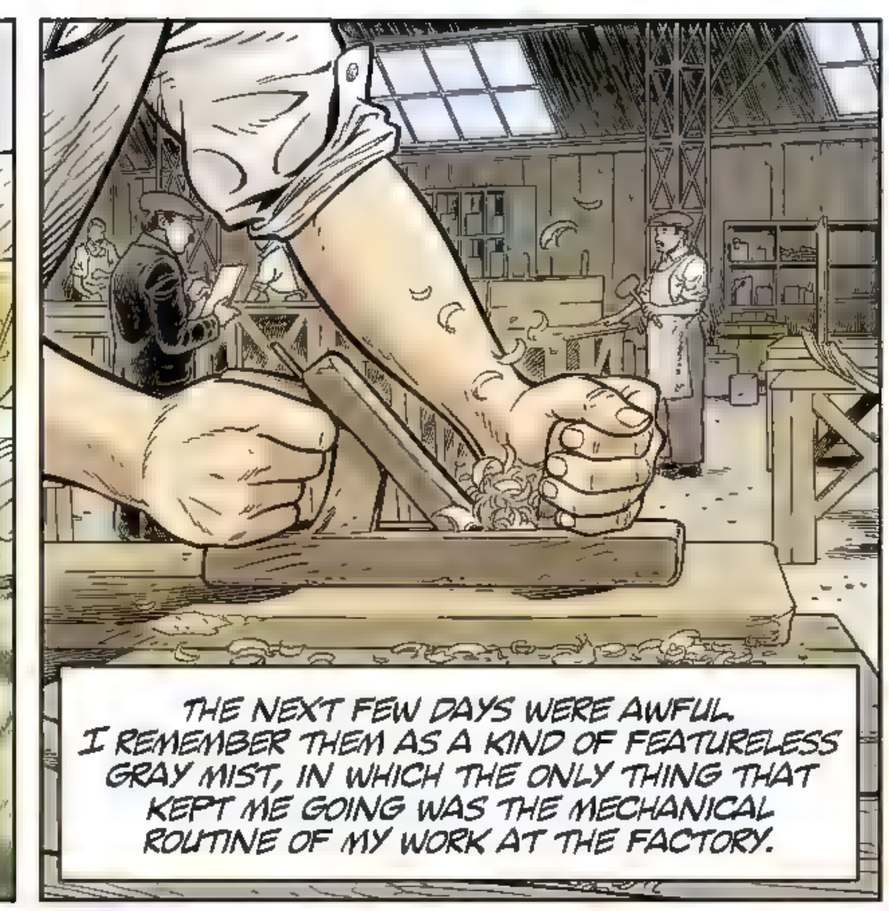

IF THE VISCOUNT FOUND OUT, HE'D BLOW A FUSE!
HE WANTS TO BE THE FIRST TO FLY THIS THING... WHICH MEANS IT'LL BE ON THE GROUND FOR QUITE A WHILE YET!


I KNEW THAT PLANE LIKE THE BACK OF MY HAND THANKS TO OSCAR, BUT I HADN'T ACTUALLY EVER FLOWN IT BEFORE.
?!


SHIT!!

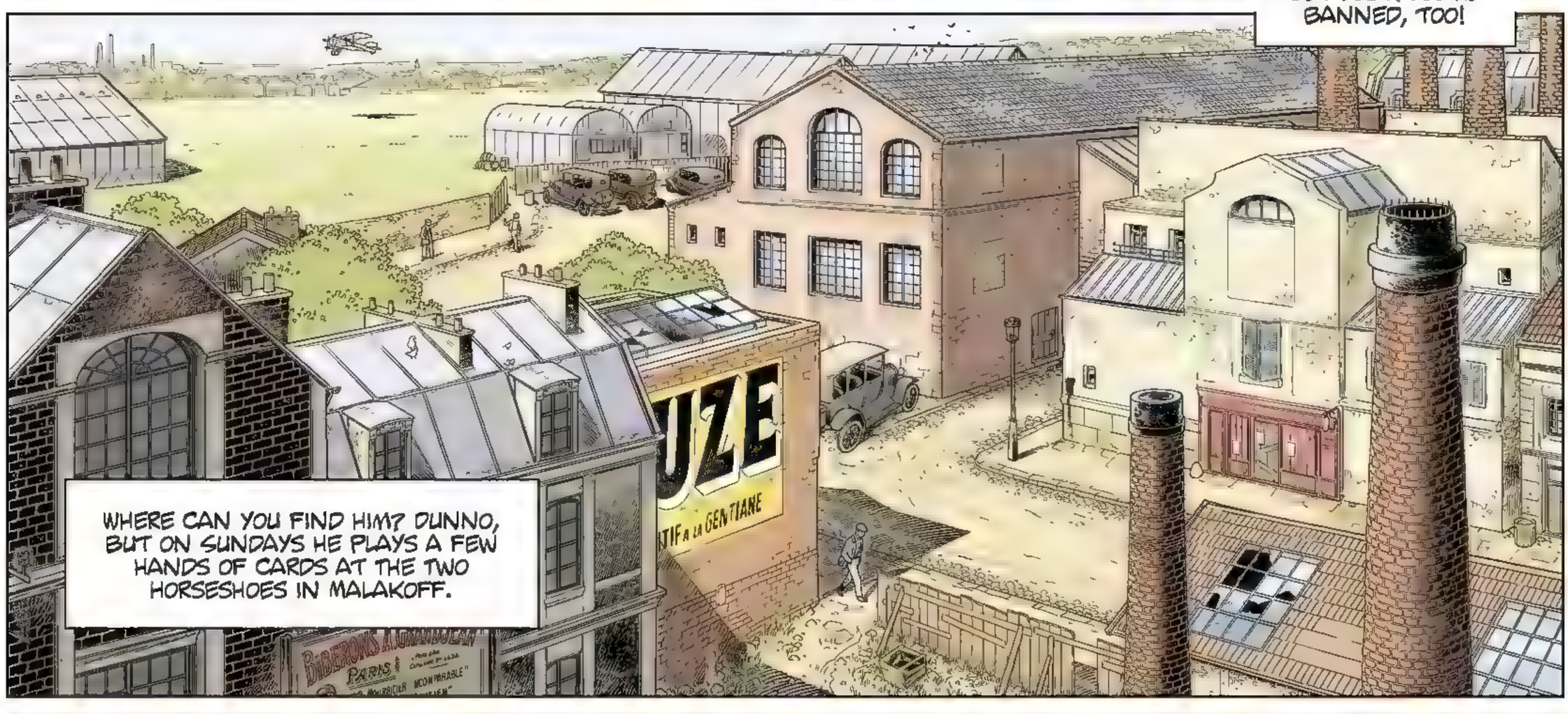

?!
WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?
LOOKING BACK, THE VISCOUNT PROBABLY SAVED MY LIFE THAT DAY... UNWITTINGLY.

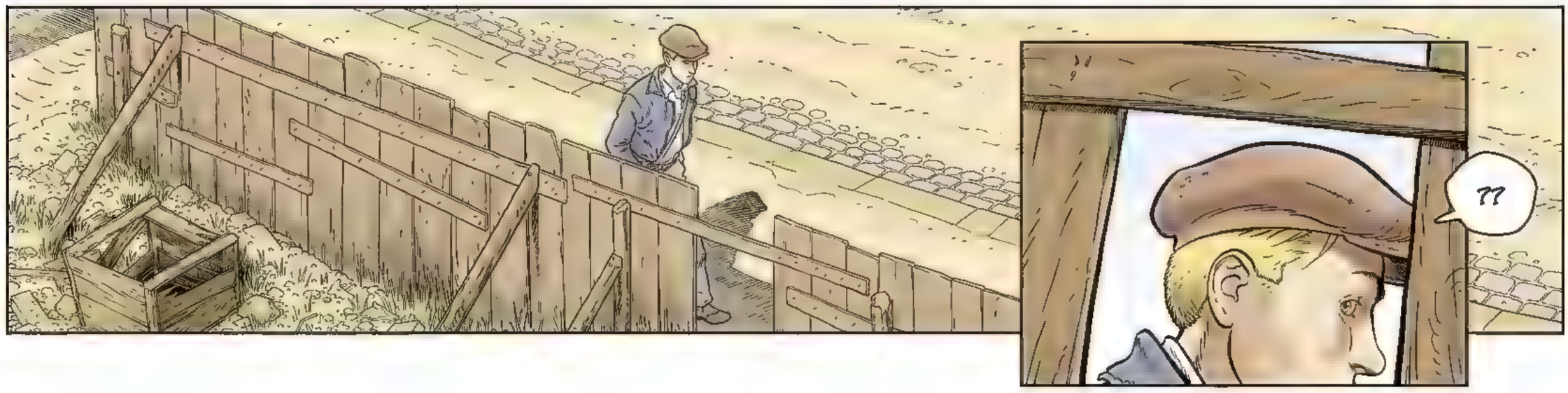

IN THE PROCESS, HE BANISHED ME LIKE A TRESPASSER, THREATENING TO REPORT ME TO THE AIRFIELD MANAGERS IF HE EVER SAW ME ANYWHERE NEAR THE HANGARS AGAIN.


THE NEXT FEW DAYS WERE AWFUL. I REMEMBER THEM AS A KIND OF FEATURELESS GRAY MIST, IN WHICH THE ONLY THING THAT KEPT ME GOING WAS THE MECHANICAL ROUTINE OF MY WORK AT THE FACTORY.

BUT WHEN YOU'RE 19 YEARS OLD, HOPE PRETTY SOON TRIUMPHS OVER DESPAIR, AND WITHIN A WEEK, I WAS BACK AT THE AIRFIELD!

I WAS ALSO EAGER TO KNOW HOW THE VISCOUNT HAD DEALT WITH OSCAR.
KICKED 'IM OUT! I'VE TAKEN OVER.
AND YOU CAN GET LOST! YOU'RE BANNED, TOO!


WHERE CAN YOU FIND HIM? DUNNO, BUT ON SUNDAYS HE PLAYS A FEW HANDS OF CARDS AT THE TWO HORSESHOES IN MALAKOFF.
UZE
TIF A LA GENTIANE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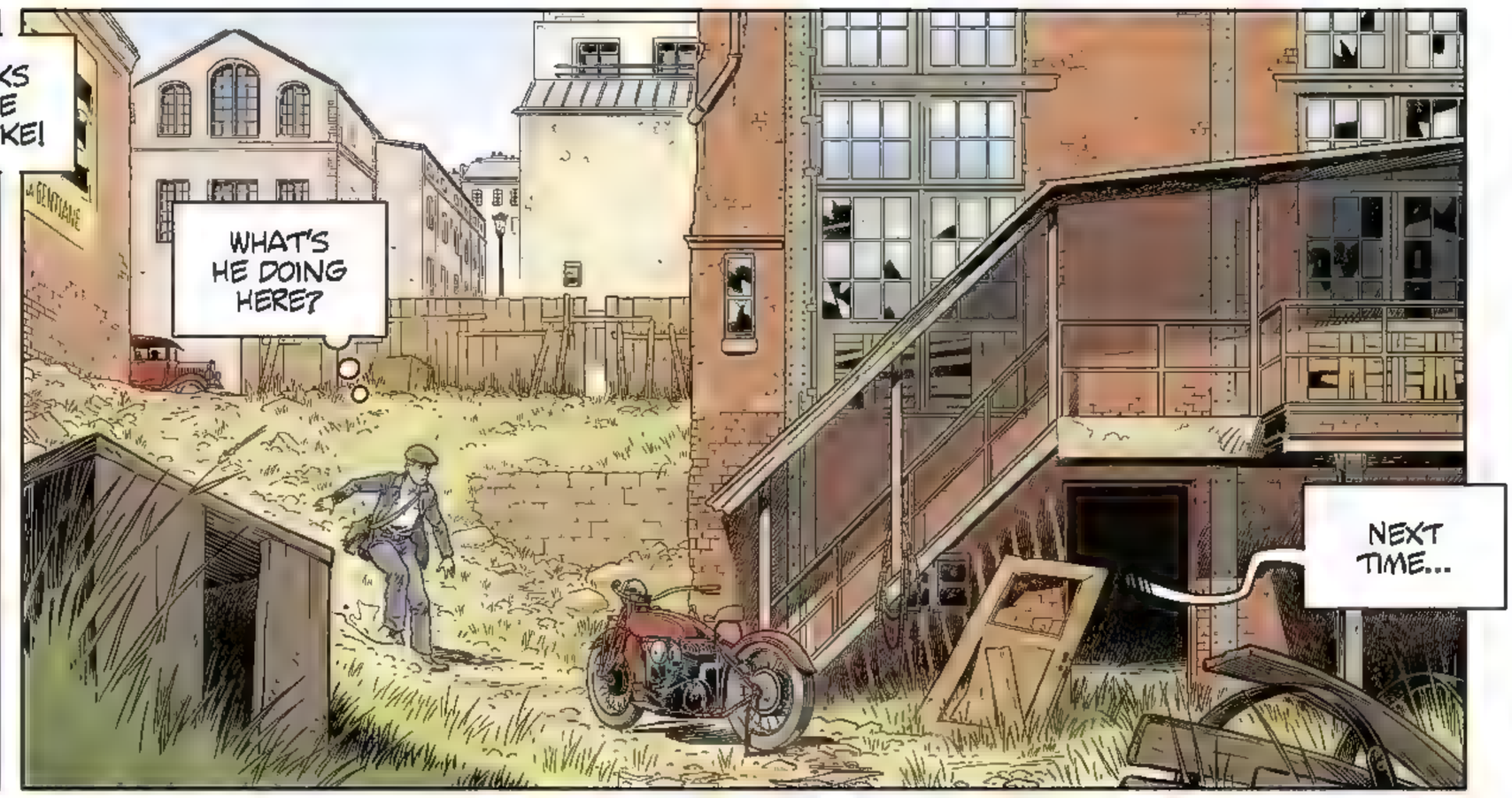
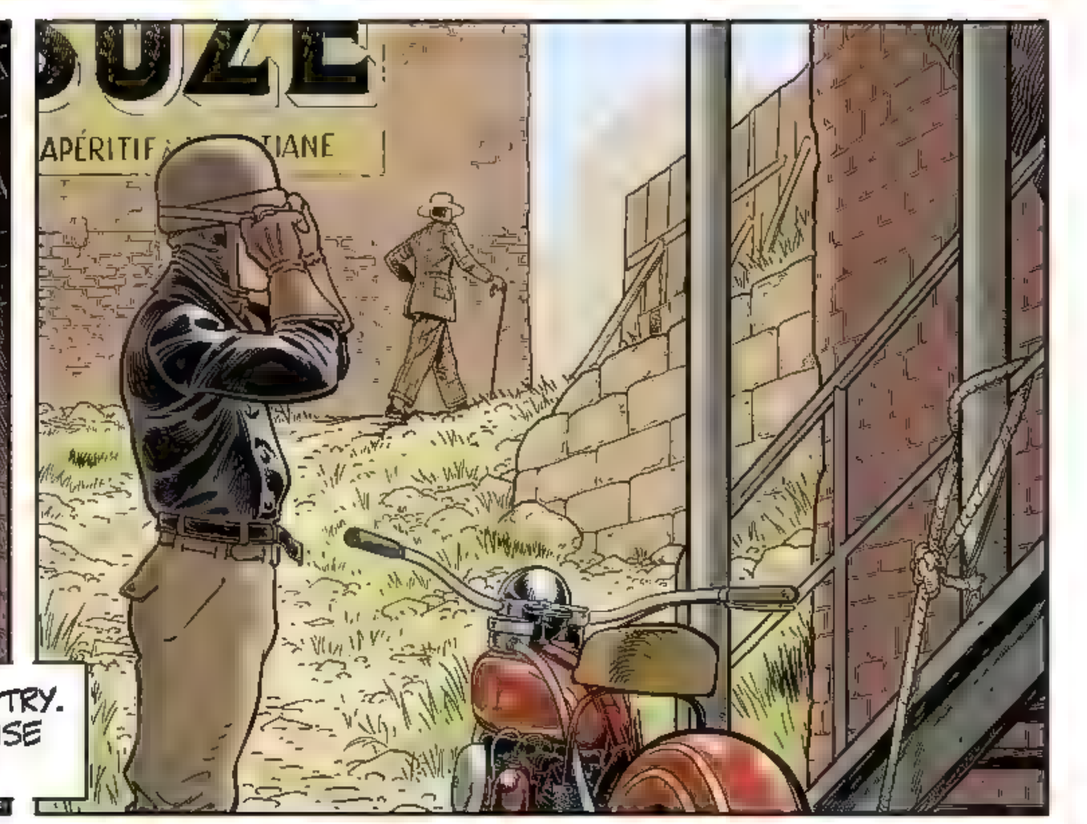
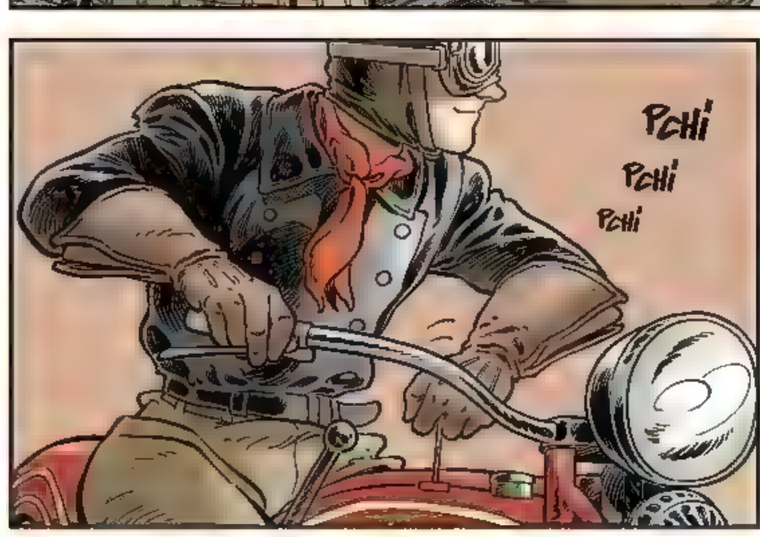
THAT LOOKS JUST LIKE MOSES'S BIKE!


WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?
NEXT TIME...

...TRY TO GET ME MORE! MY FRIENDS ARE CRAZY ABOUT IT!
IT'S HARD TO GET HOLD OF, AND A LOT OF PEOPLE WANT IT!
IT WON'T BE EASY, VISCOUNT!
BUT I'LL TRY. I PROMISE YOU!

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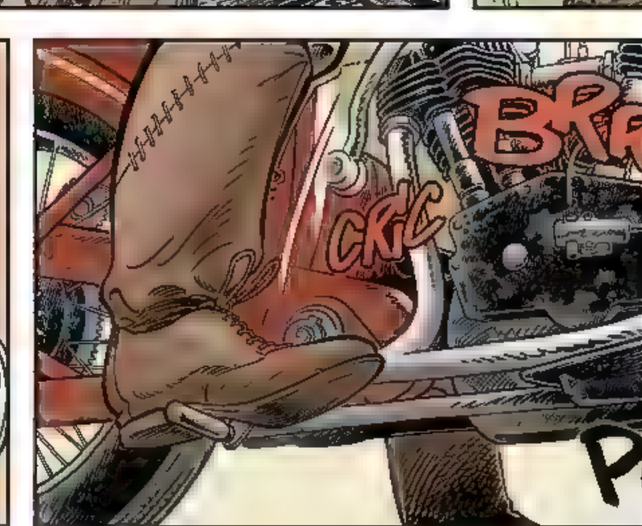
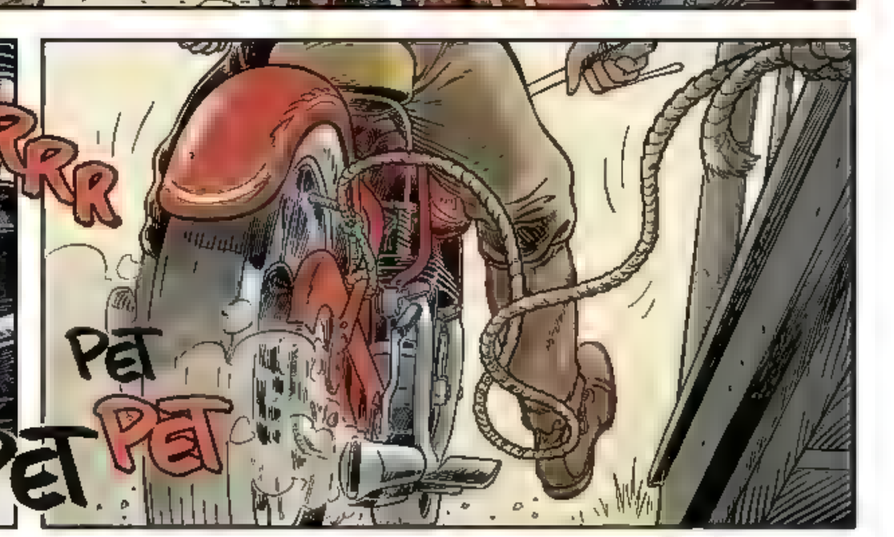

CRIC
BRRRRR


PET
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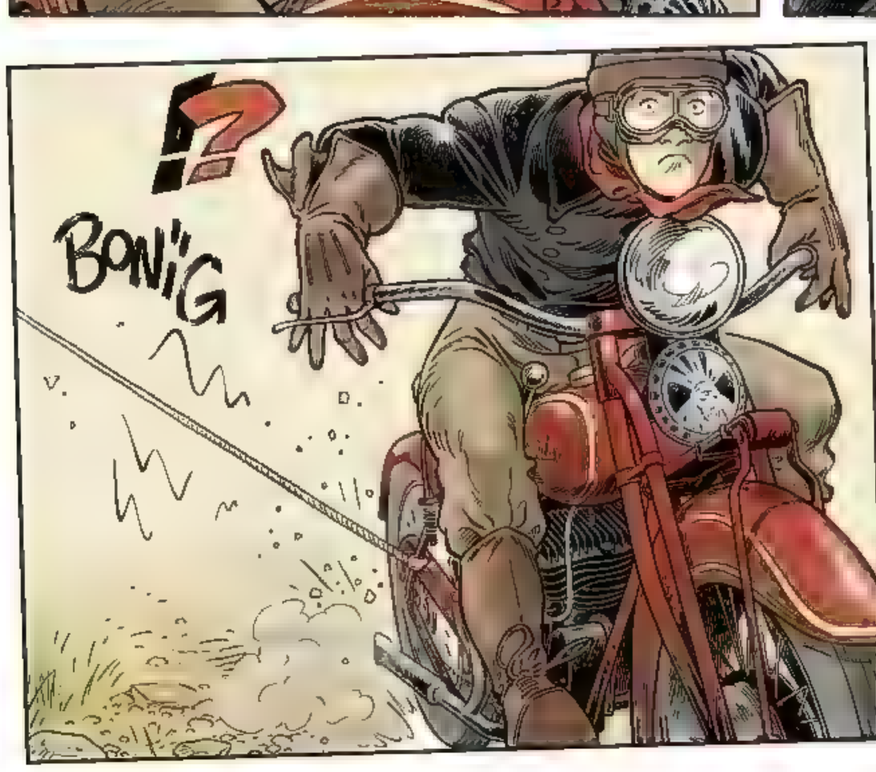
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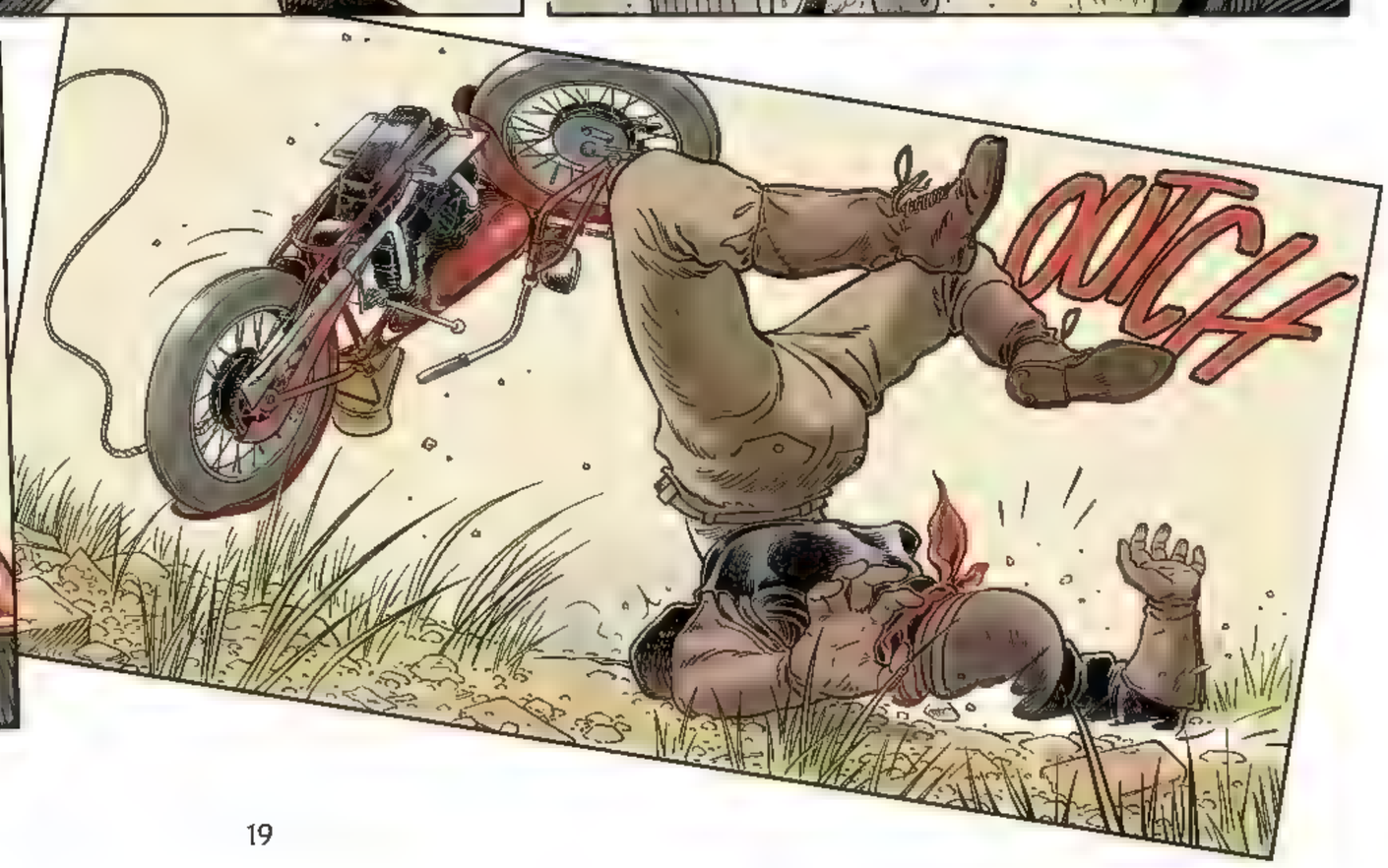

OUCH

(1) SO-CALLED ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR RED NECKERCHIEFS AND "SAVAGE" BEHAVIOR.

WHICH IS WHAT I ENDED UP DOING THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY. A GUY WHO FIXED CARS LET US USE HIS WORKSHOP AND TOOLS FOR A MODEST FEE.

LOOK, WHY DON'T YOU COME AND WORK FOR EUSTACHE, TOO, JOSEF?

I CAN ASK HIM IF YOU WANT.

?!

ALL THE FAT CATS ARE INTO FLYING THESE DAYS, Y'KNOW.

WHERE THERE ARE PLANES, THERE'S MONEY TO BE MADE. YOU COULD EASILY PAY FOR FLYING LESSONS!

HIS IDEAS GOT INTO MY HEAD, BUT I STILL HAD RESERVATIONS...

...WHICH VANISHED THAT VERY EVENING.

Dear Constance,

I hope you and your children are well.

I am writing to let you know that, in view of the curre
hat is affecting us all so badly, I find myself, much ag
bliged to increase the rent you are paying for the apart
I have made available to you.

The rent I have been charging you for the past year is consid
below the current market rate for this part of Issy-Les-Mou
As you know, I let you have this rate out of kindness to allow
you to settle in after having to leave Africa so suddenly.
The next payment will therefore be increased by 170 francs, w
brings your monthly payment to 370 francs. I realize that yo
might not be able to afford this higher rent, in which case I w
if you would vacate the apartment as soon as possible.

Believe me, my dear sister, this is a decision that I have not tak
and it is with a heavy heart that I am forced to

370 FRANCS!!

"CHRISTIAN" UNCLE ALBERT MIGHT AS WELL HAVE THROWN US OUT!

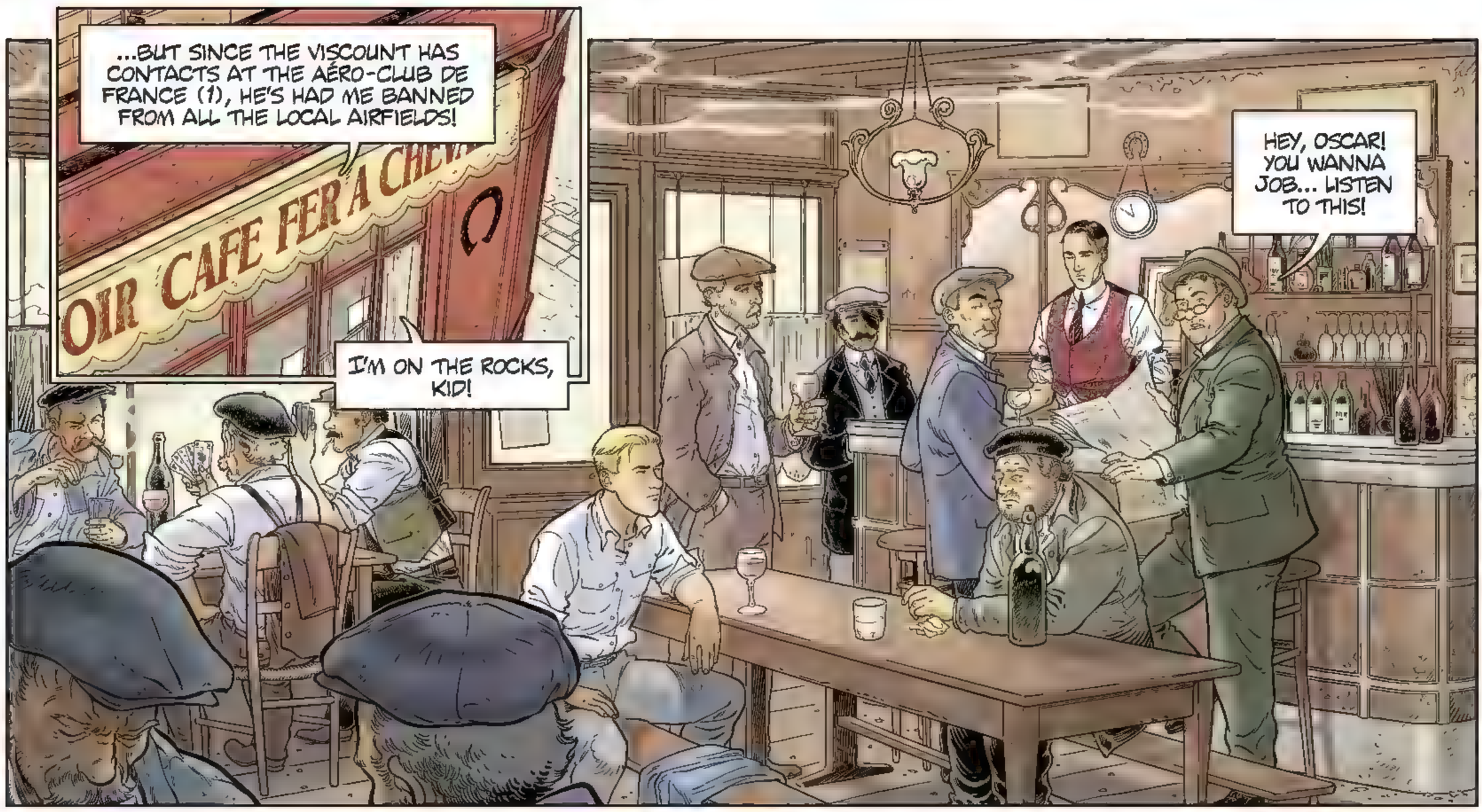
JOSEF! LET'S GO PUNCH HIM IN THE NOSE, YOU AND ME!

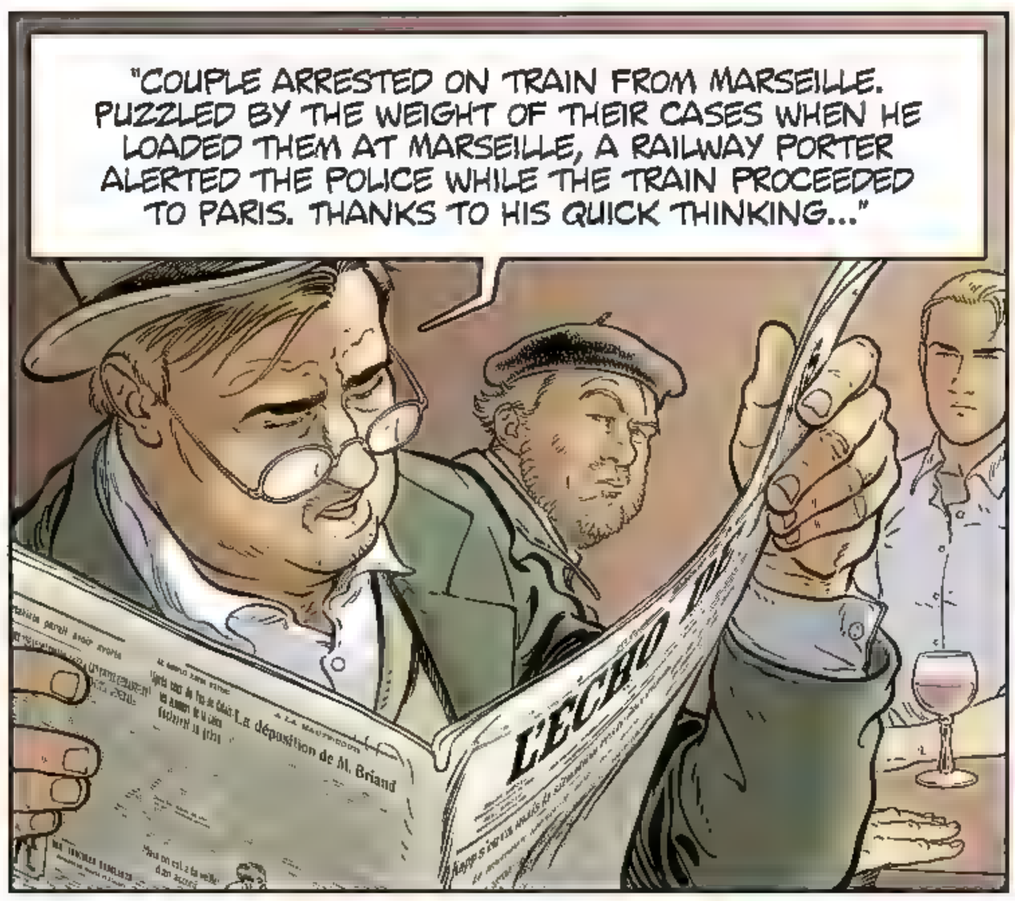
YOU REALLY THINK THAT'LL SOLVE ANYTHING, HILDA?

WELL...

UM...

DON'T WORRY! WE WON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN A HOVEL. I'LL FIND SOME MONEY.





(1) FOUNDED IN 1898.
(2) AT THE TIME, A MANUAL WORKER EARNED AROUND 350 FRANCS PER MONTH.

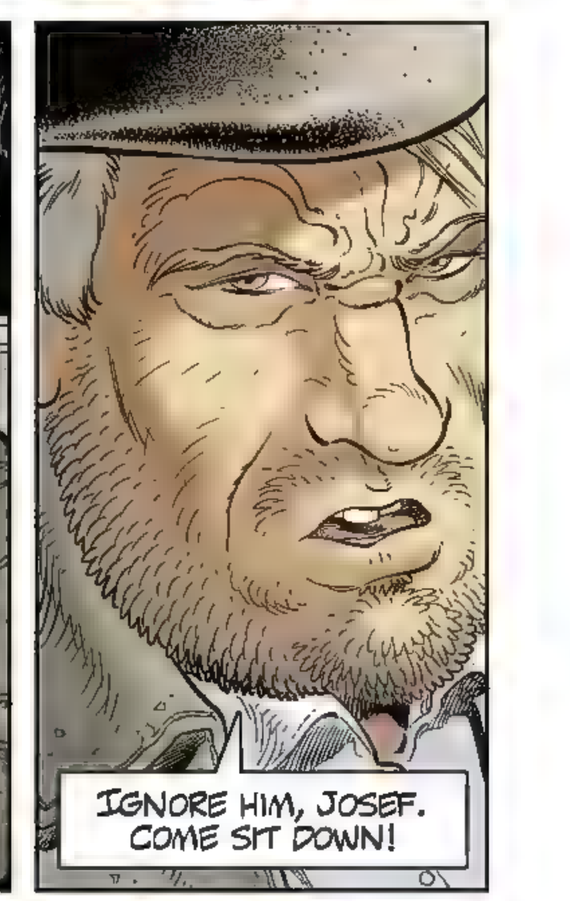
COULD I BORROW YOUR PAPER A MINUTE, SIR?
?!

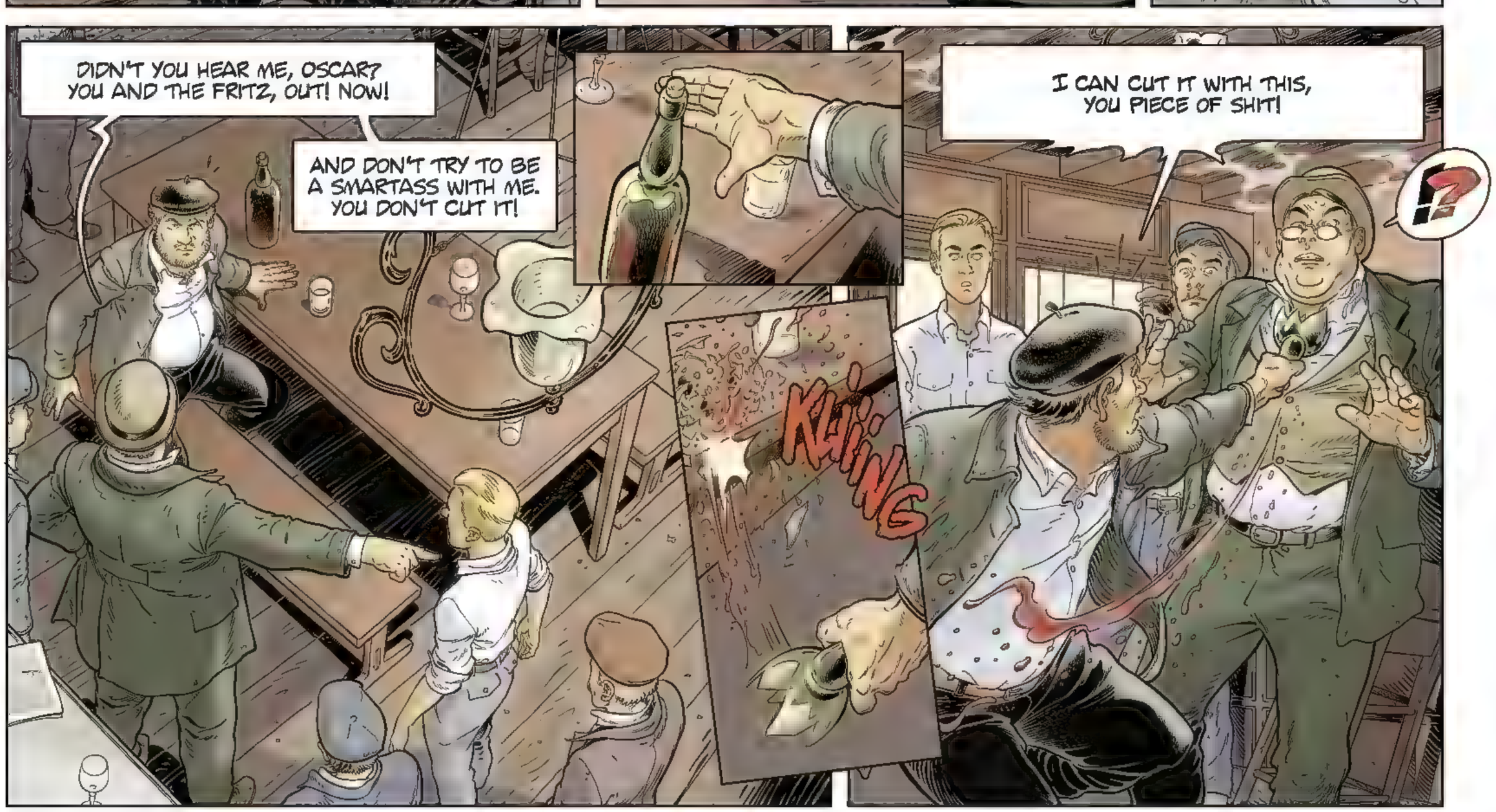
HEY, KID, WHAT'S WITH THE WEIRD ACCENT? YOU GOT A LITTLE OF THE FRITZ IN YOU?
I'M FROM ALSACE, SIR!

HA! HA! HA!
HAHA! HE WANTS TO READ MY PAPER, BUT THE LITTLE RAT CAN'T EVEN SPEAK PROPER FRENCH!

SCRAM! WE DON'T WANT KRAUTS IN HERE!
?!
YEAH! BASIL'S RIGHT!
TO HELL WITH THE KRAUTS! THE DIRTY BASTARDS!

LEAVE HIM ALONE, BASIL!
OH YEAH? THEN YOU CAN SCRAM, TOO!
HE'S WITH ME!


IGNORE HIM, JOSEF. COME SIT DOWN!


DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME, OSCAR? YOU AND THE FRITZ, OUT! NOW!
AND DON'T TRY TO BE A SMARTASS WITH ME. YOU DON'T CUT IT!
KLING
I CAN CUT IT WITH THIS, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!
?!

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN OUR BOYS WERE DYING IN THE WAR, HUH?!
LET IT GO, OSCAR!
UH... YEAH... DROP IT, MAN!

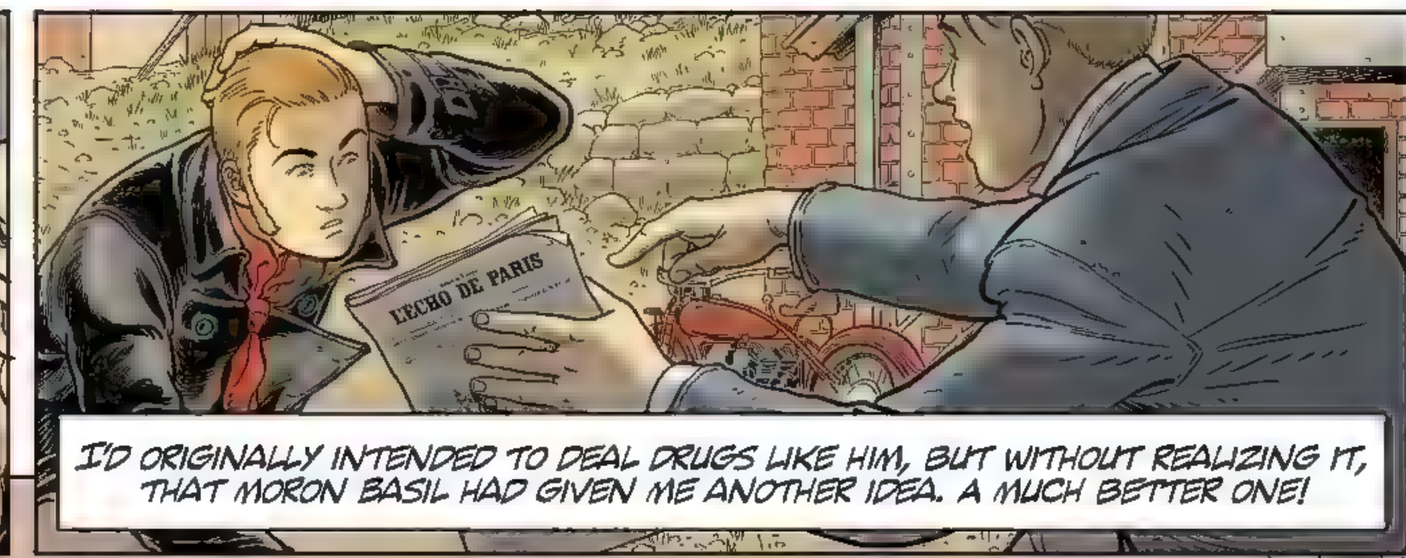
I LOST TWO OF MY SONS, SO DON'T YOU PLAY THE GREAT PATRIOTIC HERO WITH ME!

NOW, GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!

YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS, OSCAR!
YEAH...
...I'LL PAY FOR YOUR DRINKS, BASIL, WHILE YOU TELL ME ALL ABOUT YOUR TIME IN THE TRENCHES!

VIELEN DANK FÜR DIE ZEITUNG!
?

OSCAR, I NEED TO TALK TO YOU... BUT NOT HERE.
AMER
PICON



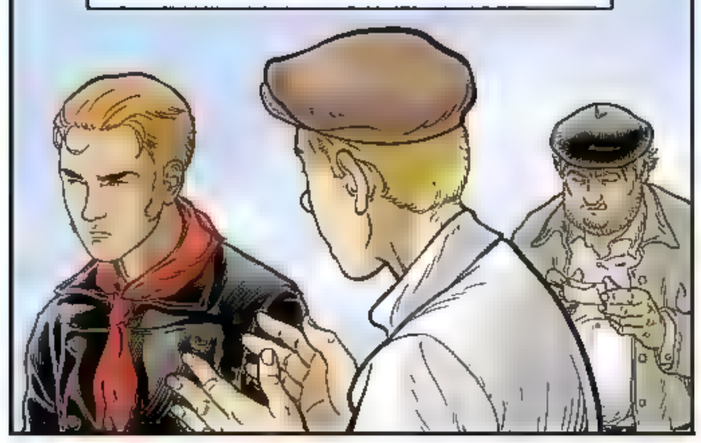
IT MEANT THAT I NEEDED OSCAR'S COMPLICITY, BUT HE WAS QUITE HAPPY TO GO ALONG WITH IT.

NOT SO FAST, MOSES!

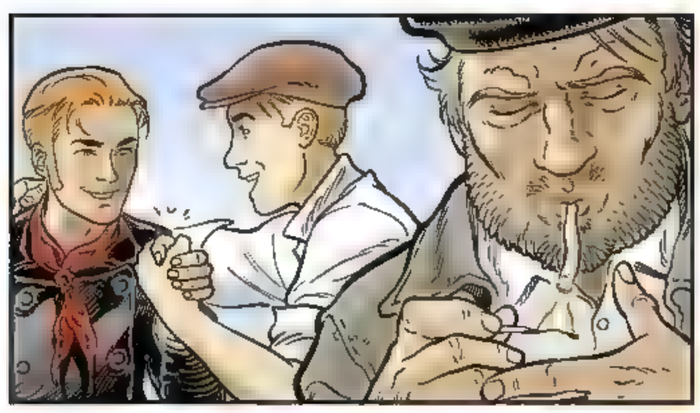
?

KEEP PEDALING, LAPIZE! (1) YOU CAN DO IT!

BUT IT WAS MORE DIFFICULT TO PERSUADE MOSES, WHO WAS AFRAID OF EUSTACHE'S REACTION.

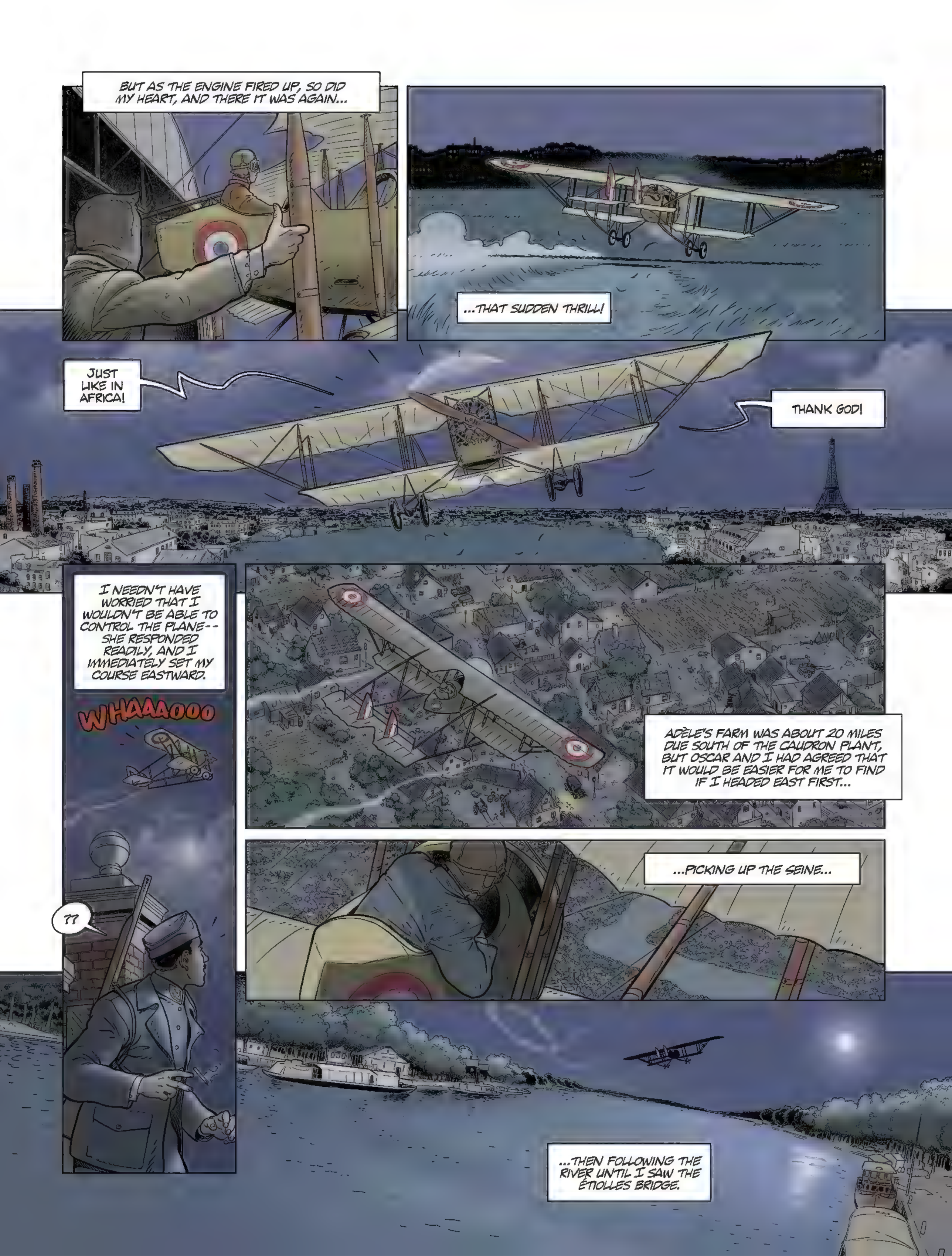


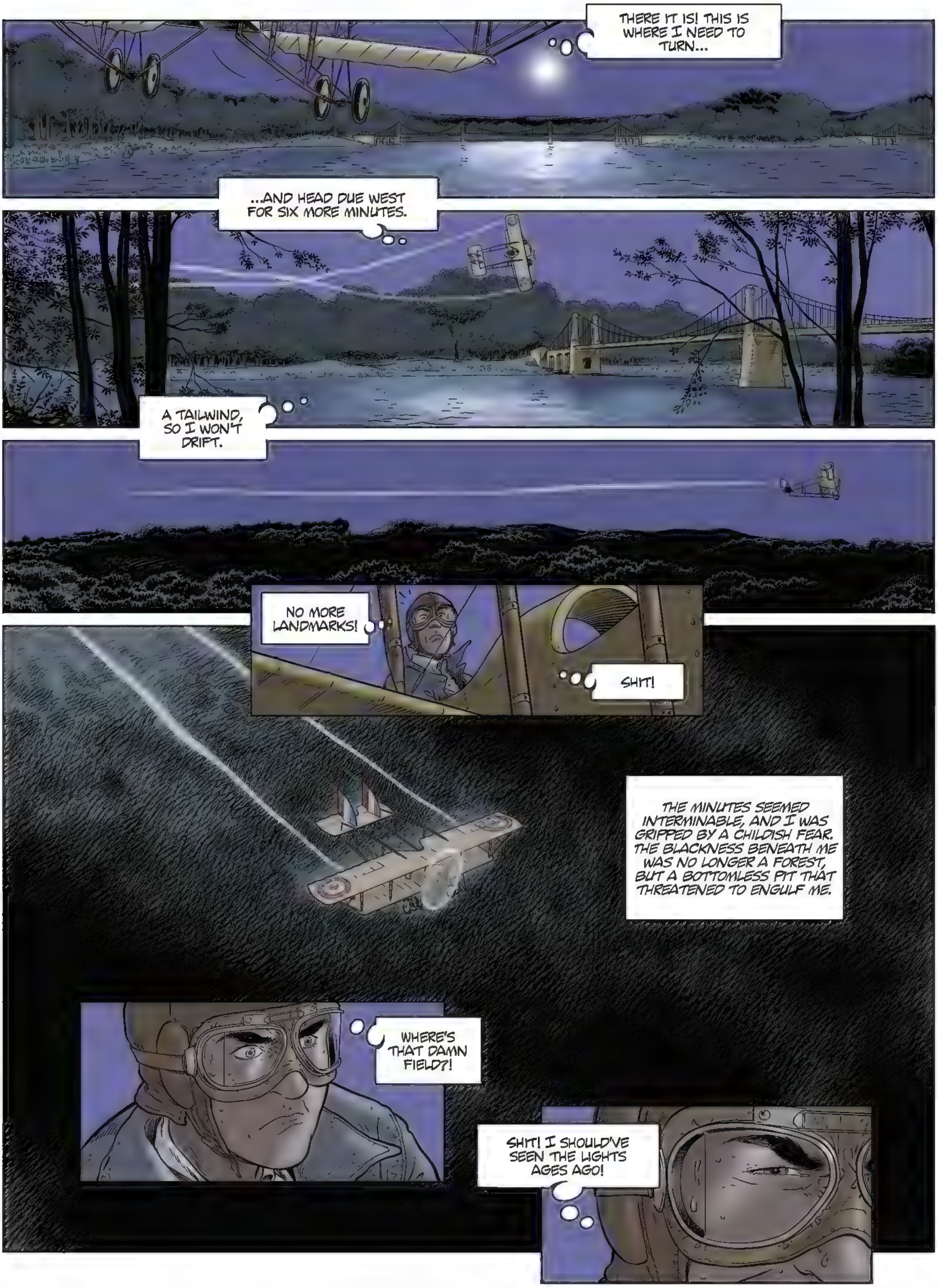
BUT AFTER OSCAR'S PERFORMANCE AT THE TWO HORSESHOES, I WAS NO LONGER AFRAID OF THE APACHES.

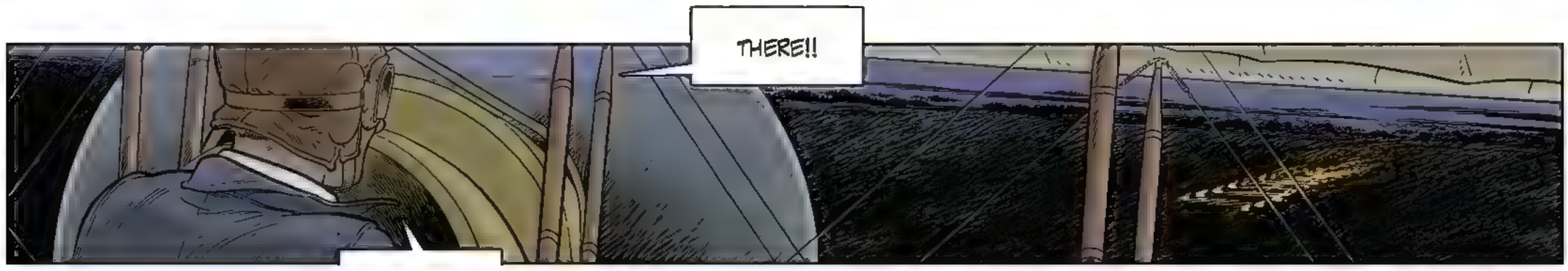


(1) OCTAVE LAPIZE WAS A FRENCH CYCLIST WHO WON THE TOUR DE FRANCE IN 1910.

STOPPEZ VOUS
PHEW! THEY HAVEN'T CHANGED THE LOCK!
CLIC!
LOOK, UH... YOU CAN STILL CHANGE YOUR MIND, KID. THIS IS RISKY!
OSCAR! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU TOLD ME HOW TO FLY A G.3?
DON'T WORRY! IT'S GOT TO BE EASIER TO FLY THAN MY FATHER'S OLD ALBATROS!
AUTO MOBILINE
THE ONLY TRICKY THING WILL BE FINDING YOUR COUSIN ADÈLE'S FIELD IN THE DARK!
YES, OSCAR!!
IF YOU HAVE PROBLEMS ON THE WAY, DON'T TRY TO LAND JUST ANYWHERE! YOU NEED AT LEAST 40 FEET--
I NEEDED TO CONCENTRATE. I TRIED NOT TO SHOW MY ANXIETY, BUT I WAS FINDING IT DIFFICULT...
TREU TREU
TVRR
I HADN'T FLOWN A PLANE IN THREE YEARS!

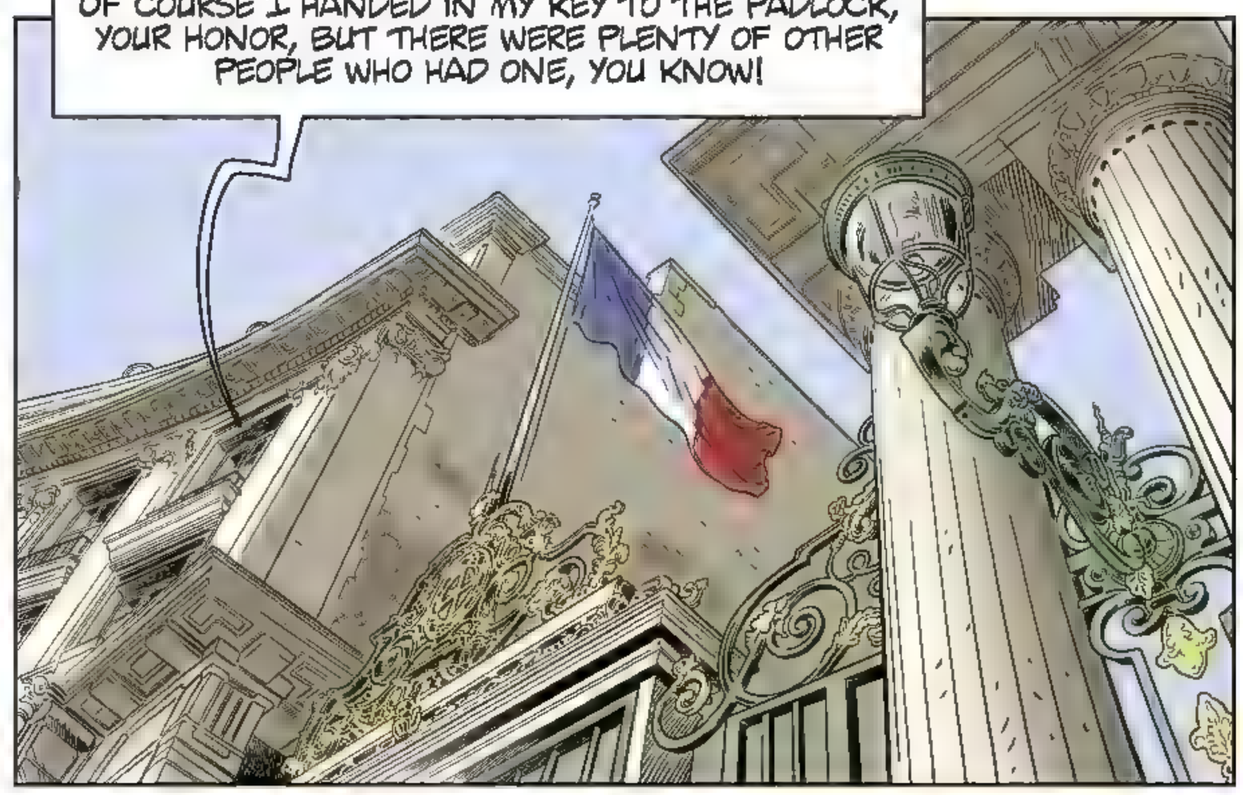

BUT AS THE ENGINE FIRED UP, SO DID MY HEART, AND THERE IT WAS AGAIN...
...THAT SUDDEN THRILL!
JUST LIKE IN AFRICA!
THANK GOD!
I NEEDN'T HAVE WORRIED THAT I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE PLANE-- SHE RESPONDED READILY, AND I IMMEDIATELY SET MY COURSE EASTWARD.
WHAAAOOO
ADÈLE'S FARM WAS ABOUT 20 MILES DUE SOUTH OF THE CAUDRON PLANT, BUT OSCAR AND I HAD AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR ME TO FIND IF I HEADED EAST FIRST...
...PICKING UP THE SEINE...
77
...THEN FOLLOWING THE RIVER UNTIL I SAW THE ÉTIOLLES BRIDGE.


THERE IT IS! THIS IS WHERE I NEED TO TURN...
...AND HEAD DUE WEST FOR SIX MORE MINUTES.
A TAILWIND, SO I WON'T DRIFT.
NO MORE LANDMARKS!
SHIT!
THE MINUTES SEEMED INTERMINABLE, AND I WAS GRIPPED BY A CHILDISH FEAR. THE BLACKNESS BENEATH ME WAS NO LONGER A FOREST, BUT A BOTTOMLESS PIT THAT THREATENED TO ENGULF ME.
WHERE'S THAT DAMN FIELD?!
SHIT! I SHOULD'VE SEEN THE LIGHTS AGES AGO!



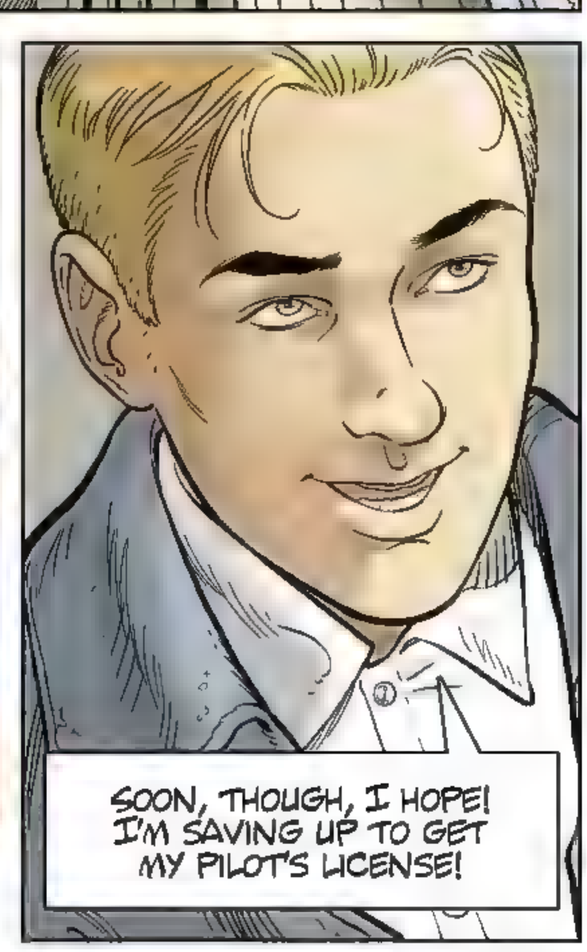
(1) "GOD BE WITH US." THE NAME OF JOSEF'S FATHER'S PLANE (SEE VOLUME 1, "TAKE-OFF").

THE NEXT MORNING, I WENT TO THE FACTORY AS USUAL, AND I DIDN'T SEE OSCAR OR MOSES FOR SEVERAL DAYS. THERE WAS SURE TO BE AN INQUEST.

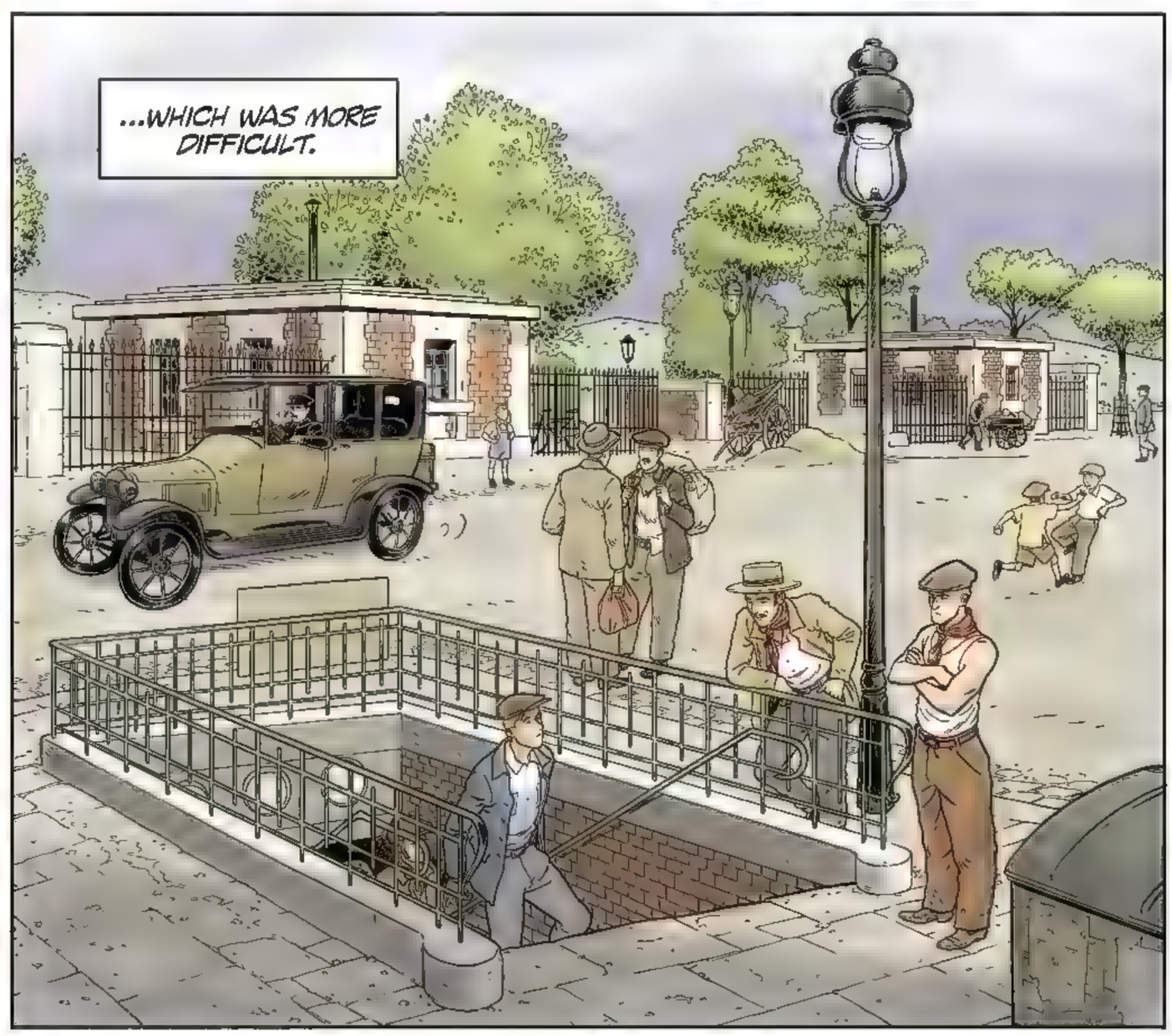

OF COURSE I HANDED IN MY KEY TO THE PADLOCK, YOUR HONOR, BUT THERE WERE PLENTY OF OTHER PEOPLE WHO HAD ONE, YOU KNOW!

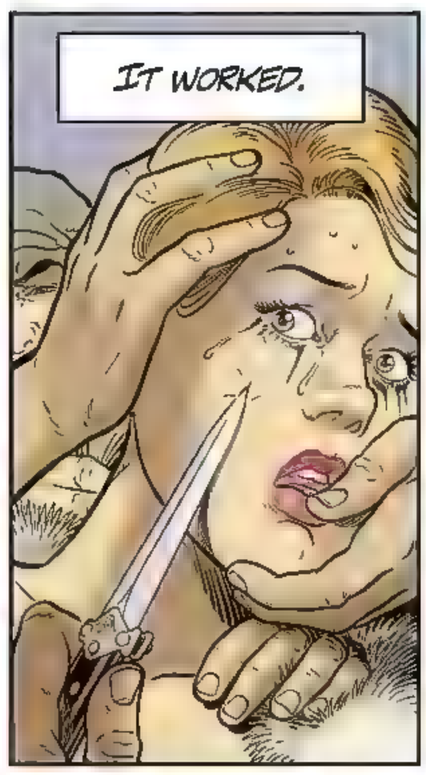
ANYWAY, HOW COULD I POSSIBLY STEAL AN AIRPLANE? I CAN'T FLY!
AND AT NIGHT?! YOU'D HAVE TO BE AN ACE... OR CRAZY!
HOW ABOUT AN ACCOMPLICE?

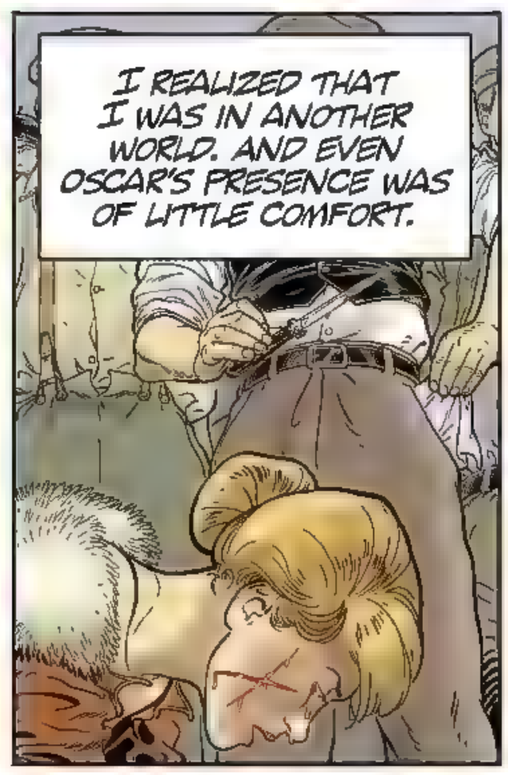
IT'S JUST SOMETHING I TOLD EVERYONE TO IMPRESS THEM, YOUR HONOR--BUT NO, I DON'T KNOW HOW TO FLY, I SWEAR!


SOON, THOUGH, I HOPE! I'M SAVING UP TO GET MY PILOT'S LICENSE!

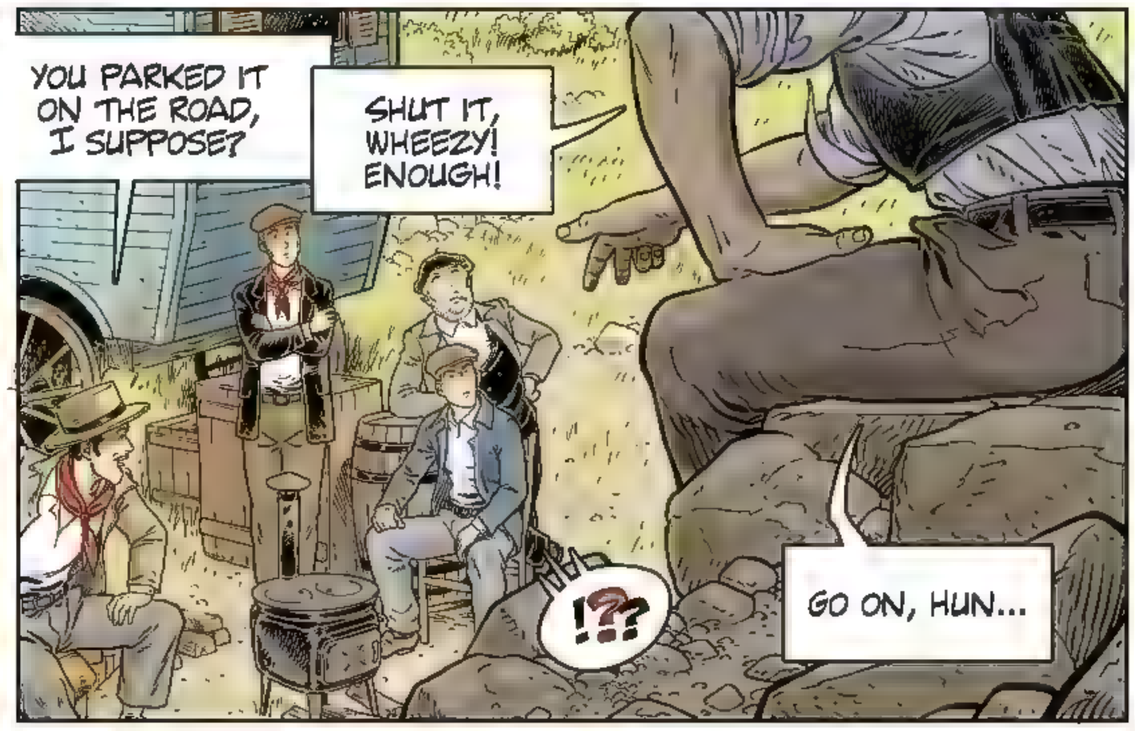
HAVING SUCCESSFULLY CARRIED OUT THE FIRST PART OF MY PLAN, I NOW HAD TO IMPLEMENT THE SECOND PART...
II

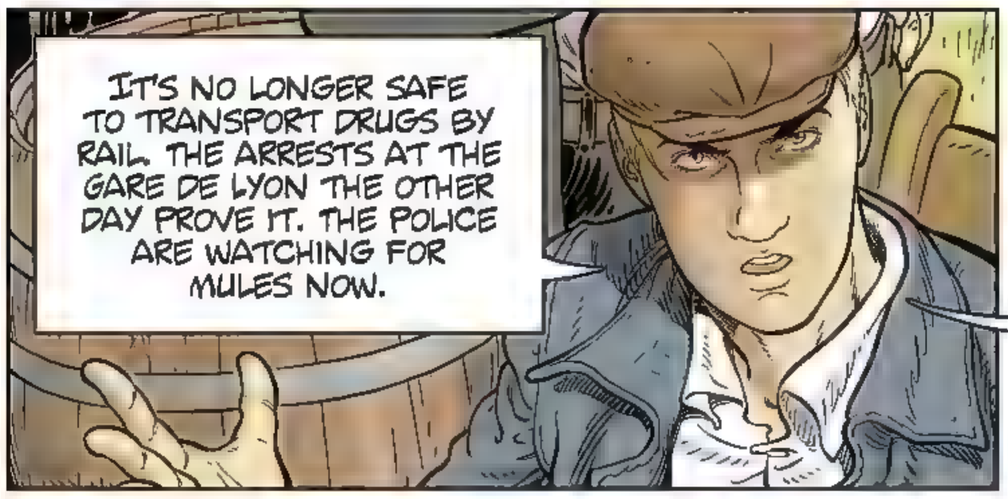

...WHICH WAS MORE DIFFICULT.

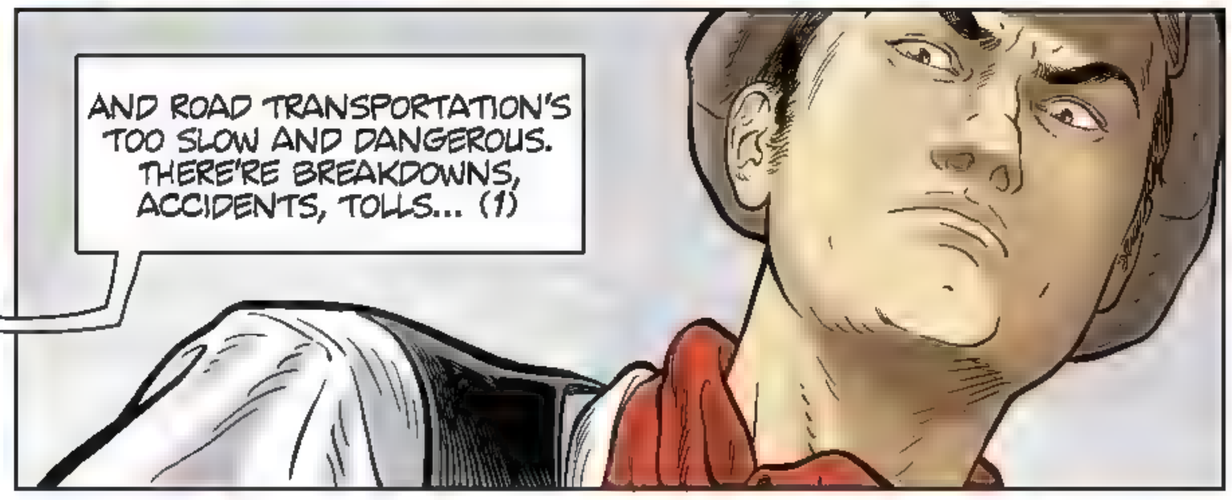


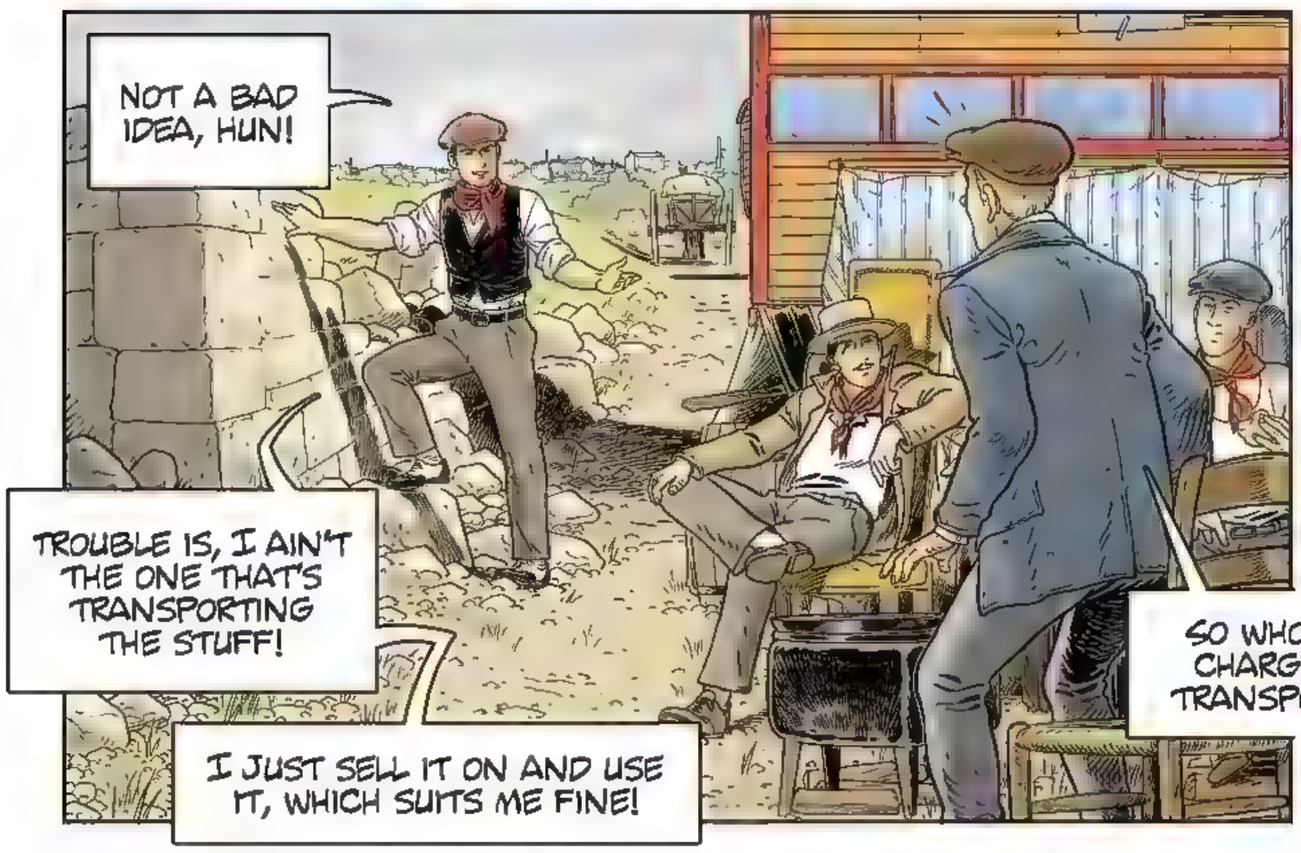


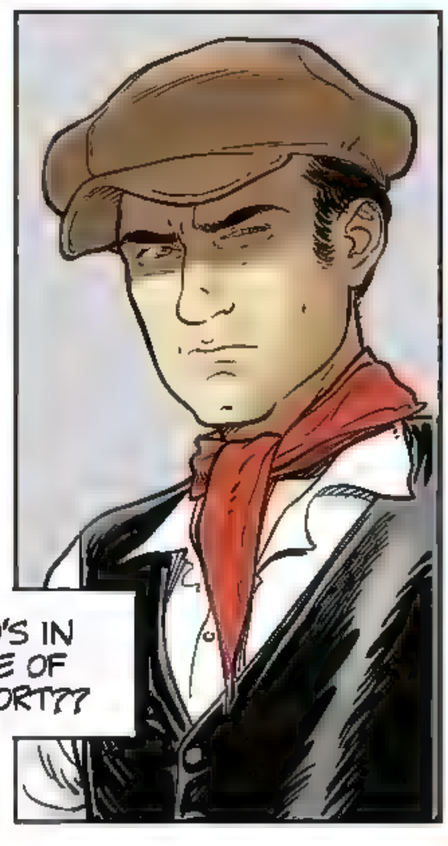
(1) A PUNISHMENT METED OUT TO INFORMERS AND DISLOYAL PROSTITUTES.

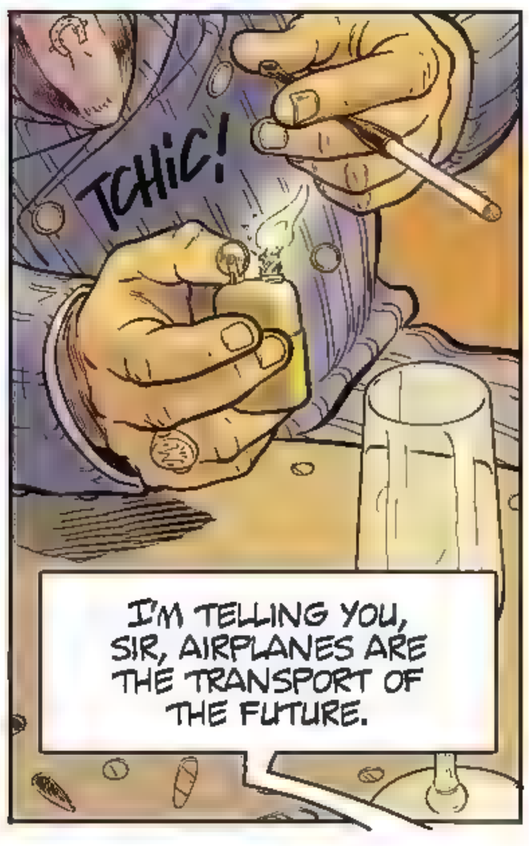




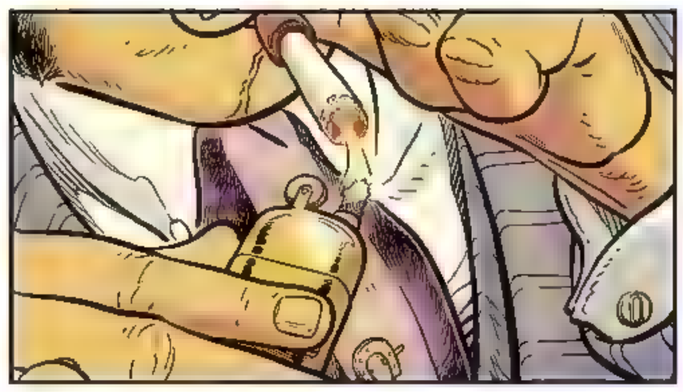




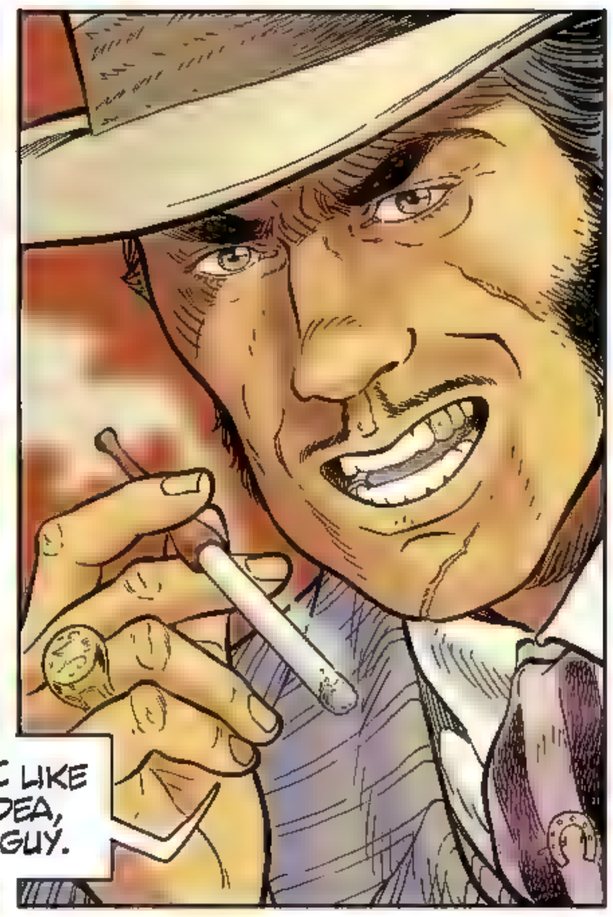


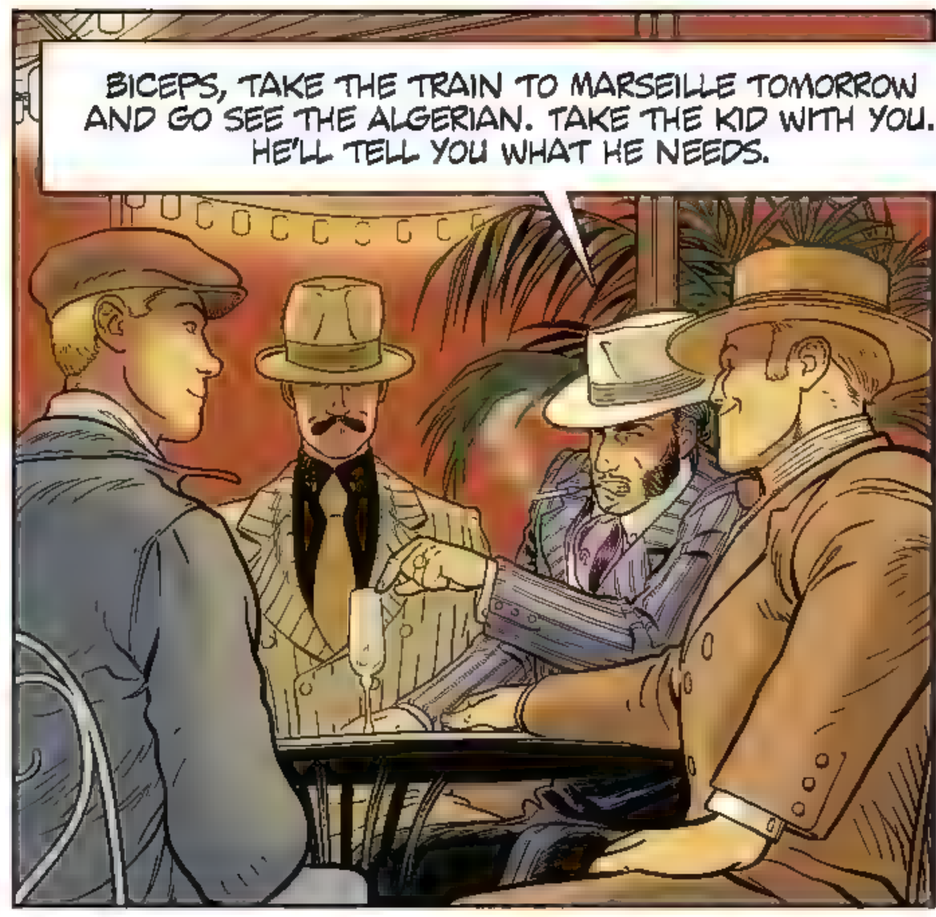


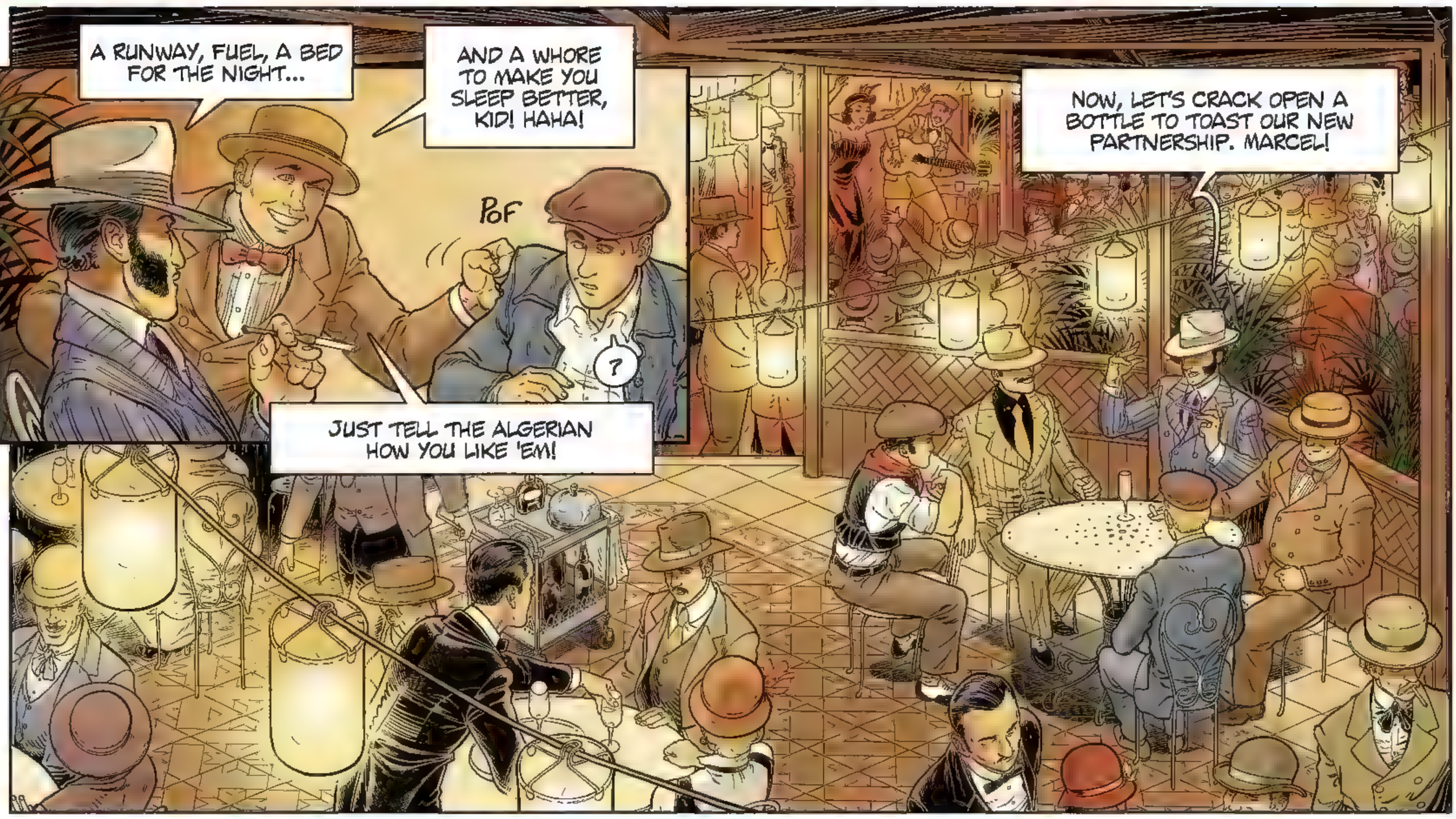
(1) ON GOODS, RATHER THAN PASSENGERS, AT THE TIME.



HMM... I LIKE YOUR IDEA, LITTLE GUY.

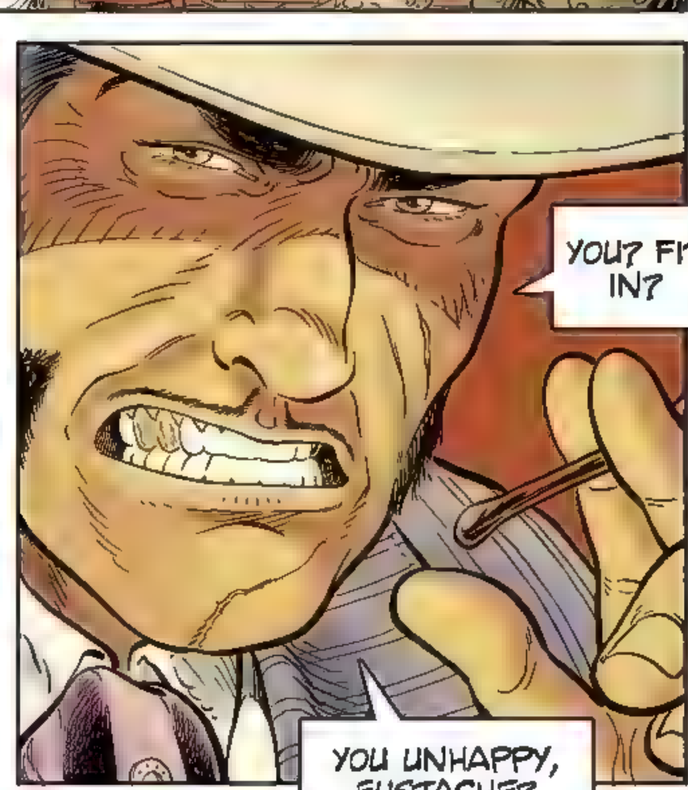



BICEPS, TAKE THE TRAIN TO MARSEILLE TOMORROW AND GO SEE THE ALGERIAN. TAKE THE KID WITH YOU. HE'LL TELL YOU WHAT HE NEEDS.


A RUNWAY, FUEL, A BED FOR THE NIGHT...
AND A WHORE TO MAKE YOU SLEEP BETTER, KID! HAHA!
POF
?
JUST TELL THE ALGERIAN HOW YOU LIKE 'EM!
NOW, LET'S CRACK OPEN A BOTTLE TO TOAST OUR NEW PARTNERSHIP. MARCEL!

STICK WITH US AND YOU'LL SOON BE FLUSH, LITTLE GUY!

SO WHERE DO I FIT IN, MILO?
??


YOU? FIT IN?
YOU UNHAPPY, EUSTACHE?

WELL... I MEAN TO SAY...
PANAME'S YOUR TURF, SO WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

I BROUGHT HIM HERE, DIDN'T I? I JUST WANT MY CUT, THAT'S ALL.

CAN YOU FLY?
NO...
WILL YOU REPLACE THE KID IF HE DROPS DEAD ON US?
NO...
SO YOU'RE PLAYING NO PART, BUT YOU STILL WANT A SHARE?

TWO WORDS...
...GET LOST!

ASSHOLE!

OK, MILO, I'M LEAVING...
?
...BUT I WON'T FORGET THIS.

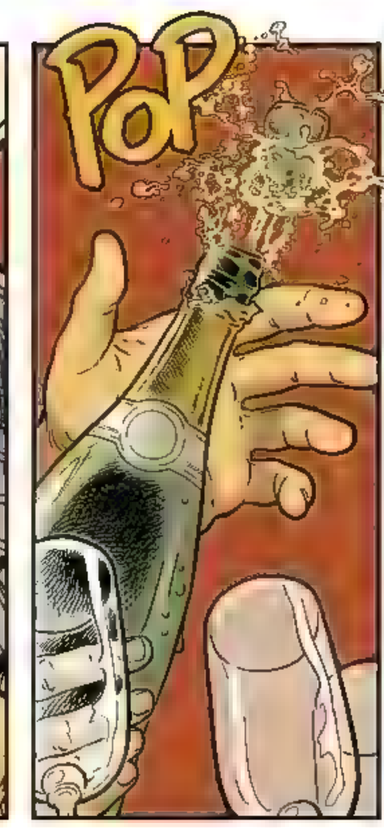
ARE YOU TRYING TO PICK A FIGHT WITH "SMILEY," APACHE?
I SAID I'M LEAVING...
LET IT GO, BICEPS! HE'S ON HIS WAY.

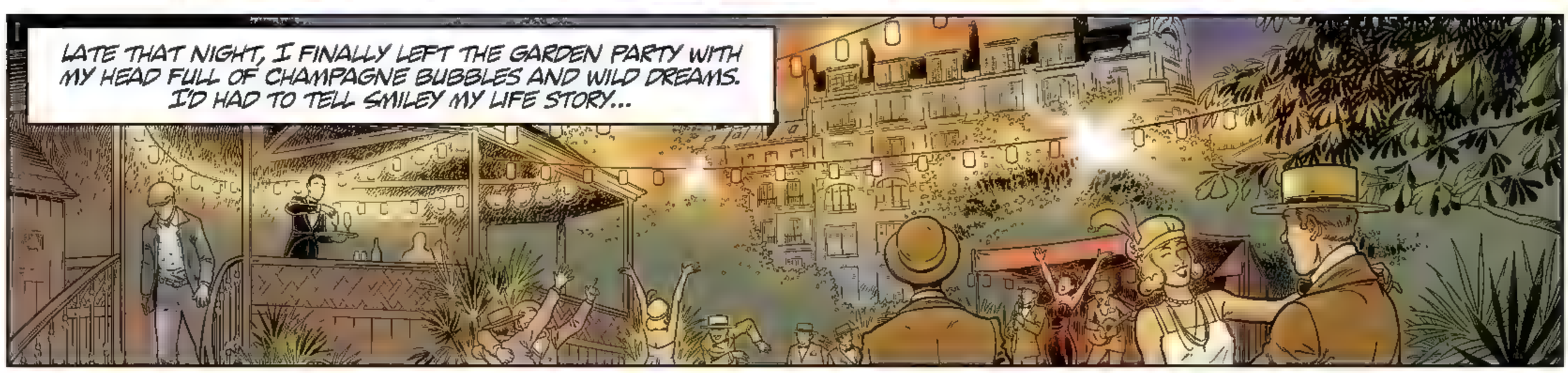
FOR A PISSANT CROOK, HE SURE IS FULL OF HIMSELF!
HE'S AMBITIOUS, WHICH IS GOOD. BUT HE'S PUSHING HIS LUCK. KEEP AN EYE ON HIM, WILL YA, MARCEL?
HEY!
NO PROBLEM!
?
?

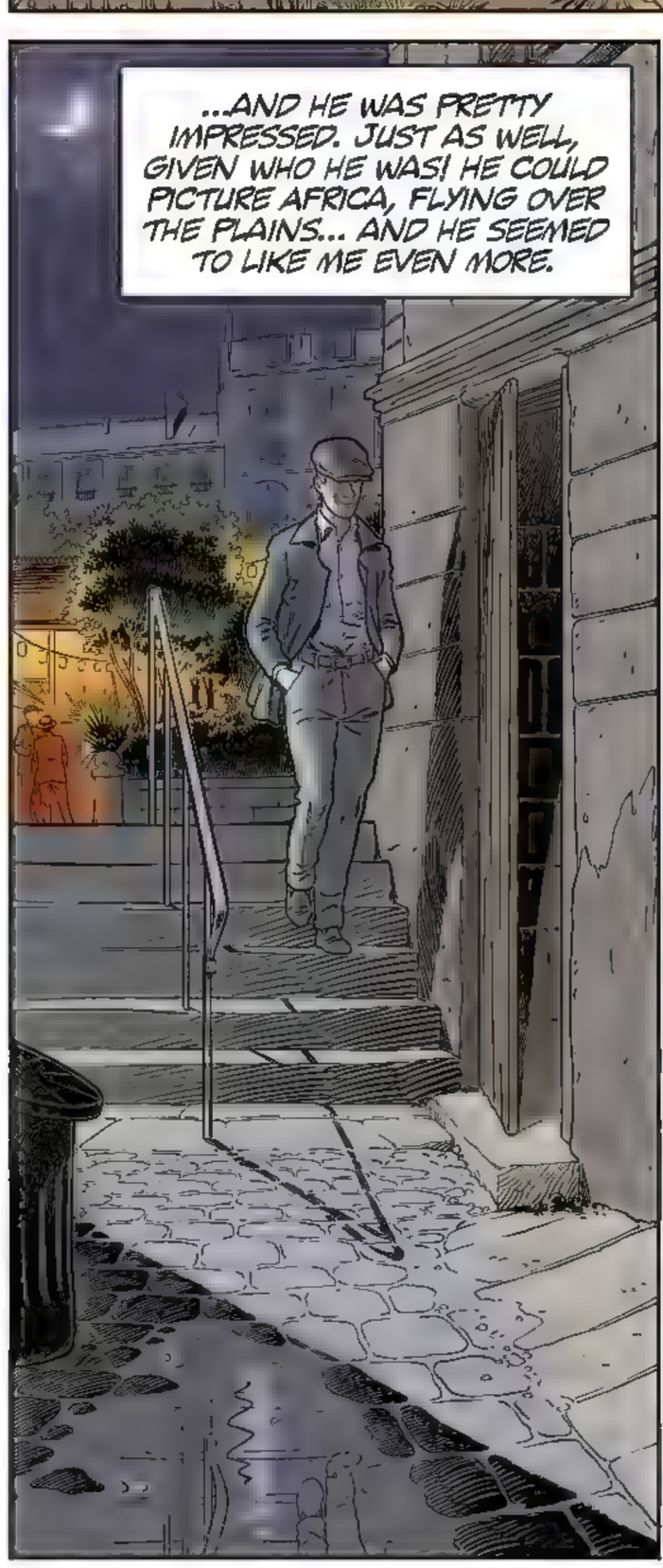
AS FOR YOU, LITTLE GUY...
?!
...I HOPE YOU AIN'T MESSING WITH ME--FOR YOUR SAKE!

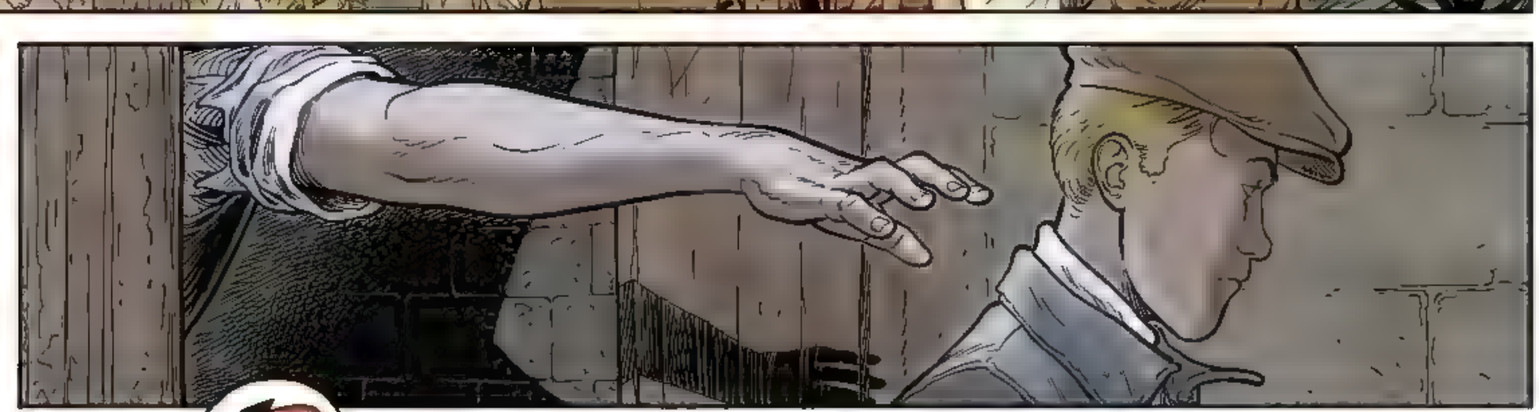
I'M NOT LYING TO YOU, SIR. I PROMISE!
I DON'T WANT TO WASTE MY LIFE IN A FACTORY. I WANT TO BE A PILOT!

I BELIEVE YOU, FLYBOY--EVEN WITH YOUR GERMAN ACCENT.


POP


LATE THAT NIGHT, I FINALLY LEFT THE GARDEN PARTY WITH MY HEAD FULL OF CHAMPAGNE BUBBLES AND WILD DREAMS. I'D HAD TO TELL SMILEY MY LIFE STORY...


...AND HE WAS PRETTY IMPRESSED. JUST AS WELL, GIVEN WHO HE WAS! HE COULD PICTURE AFRICA, FLYING OVER THE PLAINS... AND HE SEEMED TO LIKE ME EVEN MORE.



!?
LISTEN TO ME, HUN! YOU PERSUADED ME TO INTRODUCE YOU TO MY SUPPLIER, BUT THINGS AIN'T GOING THE WAY I PLANNED.

TURNS OUT I'M JUST A DUMMY! SO YOU'RE GONNA GIVE ME HALF THE DOUGH YOU GET EVERY TIME YOU DELIVER!
!?

OR ELSE YOUR PRETTY LITTLE SISTER HEDWIG WILL END UP LOOKING LIKE THAT SLUT YOU SAW THE OTHER DAY, GOT IT?
AND THEN WE'LL SEND HER TO A TUNISIAN PRISON!

MILO W-WOULDN'T ALLOW IT!

MILO'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF PARIS. HE DOESN'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT YOUR SIS, AND HE WON'T CARE IF I TAKE YOUR DOUGH. IT'S NOT HIS BEEF.

YOU GOT IT?

Y... YEAH.

TCHIC!

NOW, HAND OVER THE CASH HE GAVE YOU JUST NOW! THAT'LL BE A GOOD START.

BUT HOW DID YOU--?

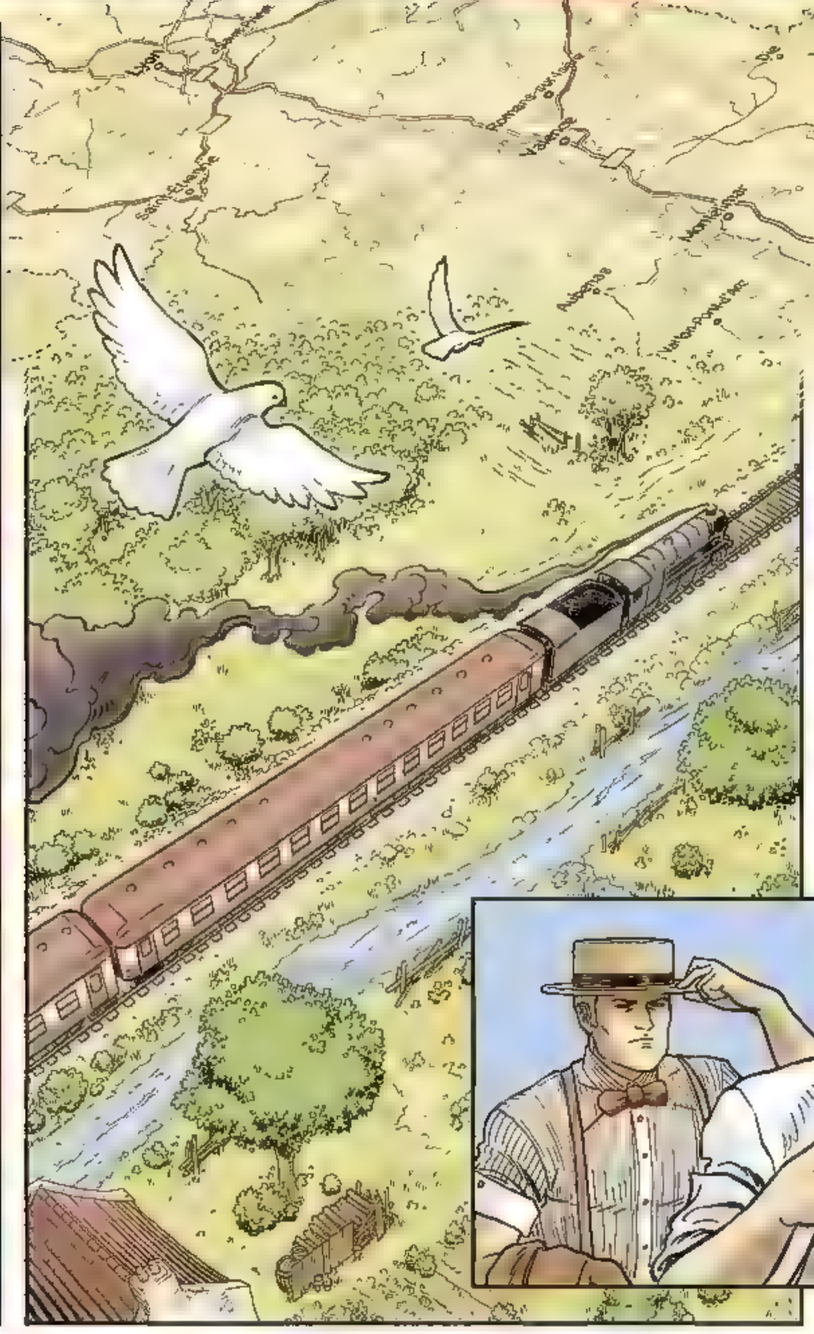
I WAS WATCHING, OF COURSE!

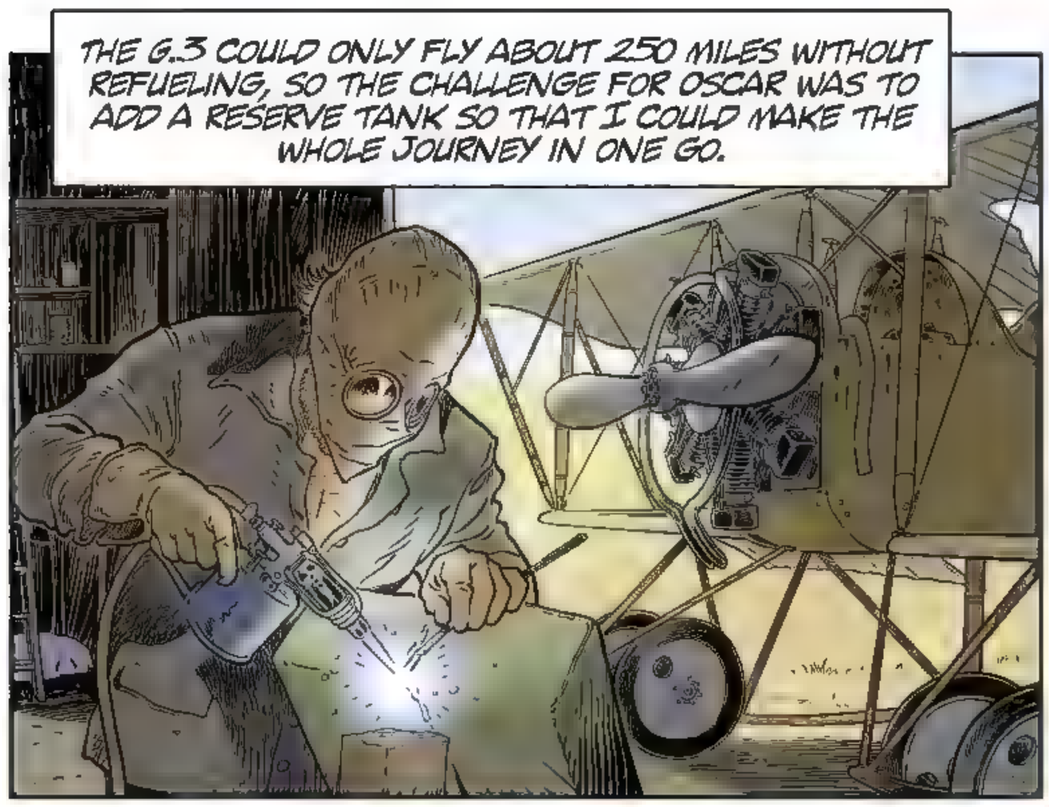
BUT IT'S MY TAXI FARE HOME! THE SUBWAY'S CLOSED!

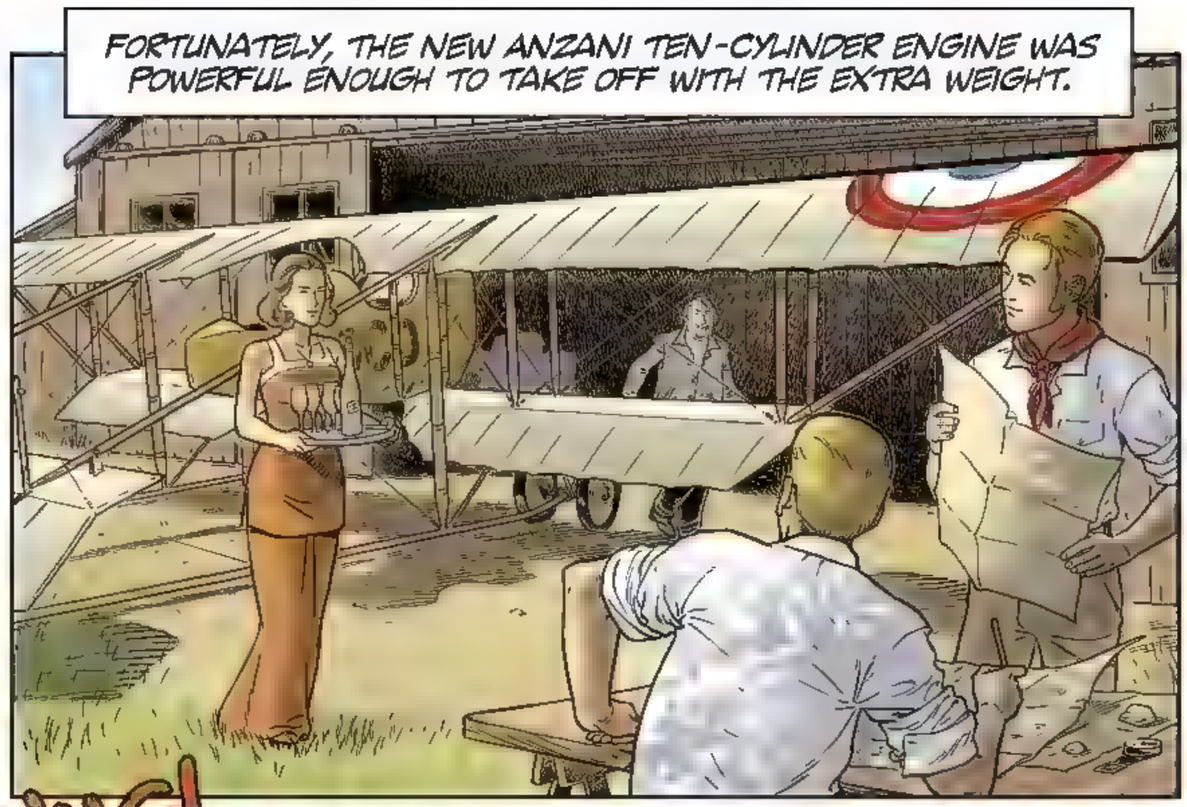
THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO HOT-FOOT IT! A FEW BLOCKS FOR A KID LIKE YOU IS NO SWEAT.

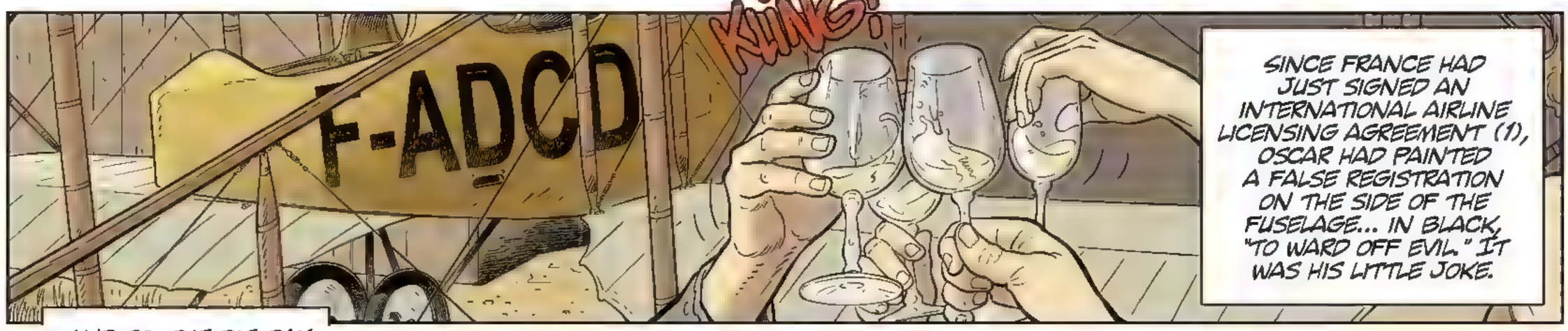
Lyon
Marseille

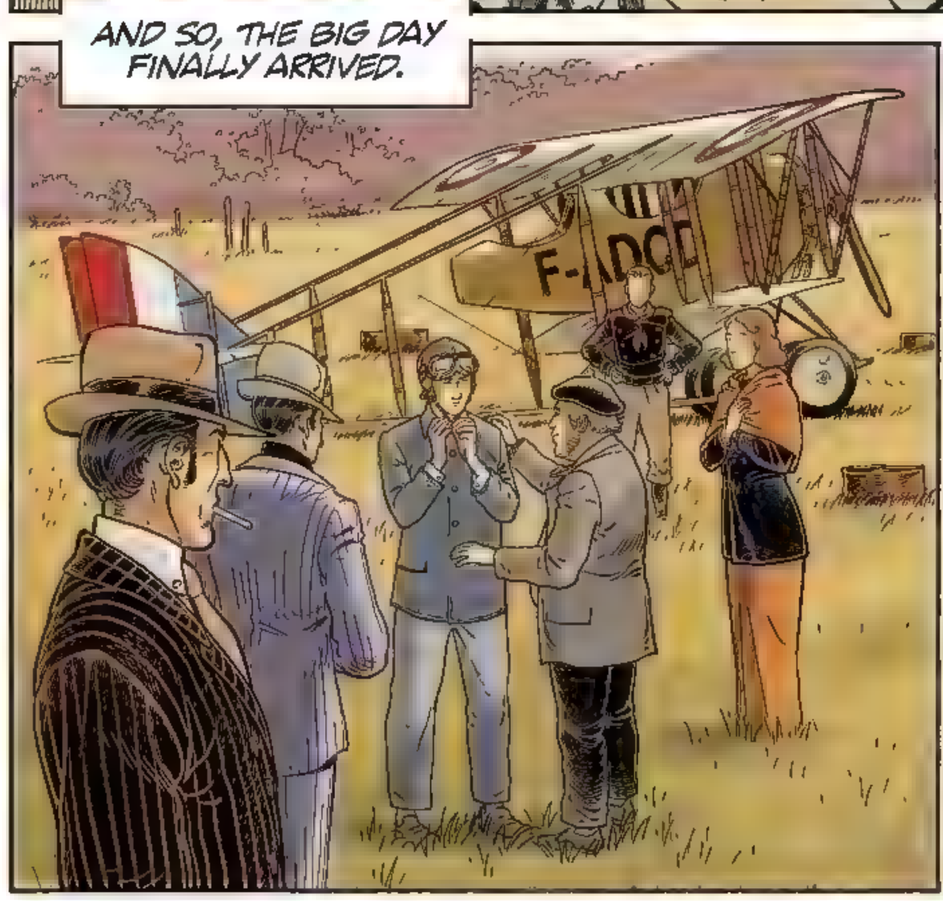
PEEEP!



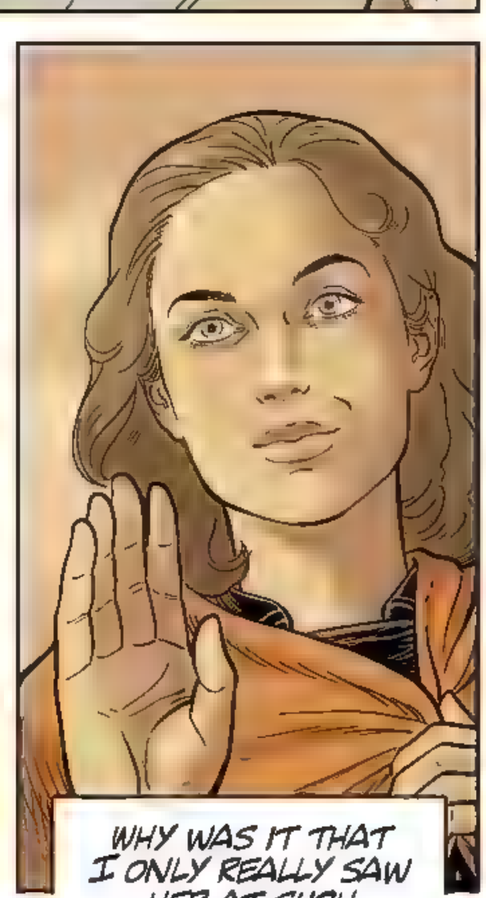

THE G.3 COULD ONLY FLY ABOUT 250 MILES WITHOUT REFUELING, SO THE CHALLENGE FOR OSCAR WAS TO ADD A RESERVE TANK SO THAT I COULD MAKE THE WHOLE JOURNEY IN ONE GO.

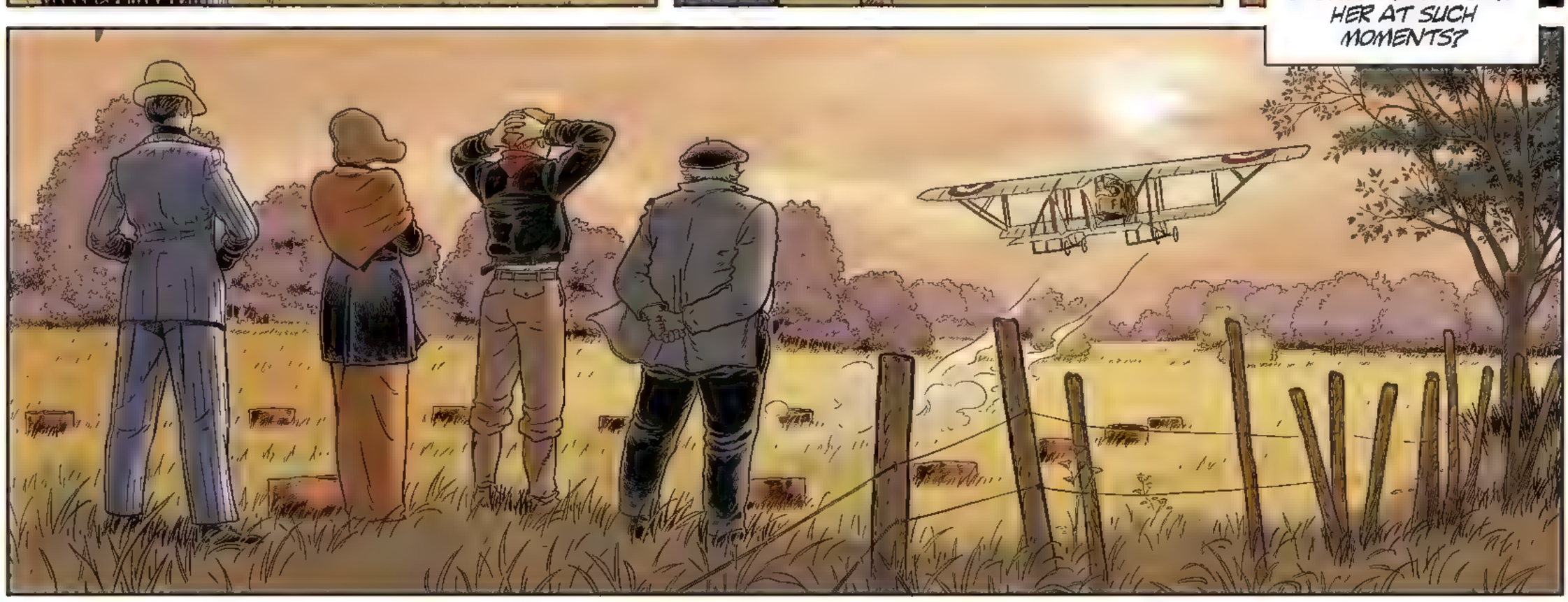

FORTUNATELY, THE NEW ANZANI TEN-CYLINDER ENGINE WAS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO TAKE OFF WITH THE EXTRA WEIGHT.


F-ADCD
KLING!
SINCE FRANCE HAD JUST SIGNED AN INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE LICENSING AGREEMENT (1), OSCAR HAD PAINTED A FALSE REGISTRATION ON THE SIDE OF THE FUSELAGE... IN BLACK, "TO WARD OFF EVIL." IT WAS HIS LITTLE JOKE.

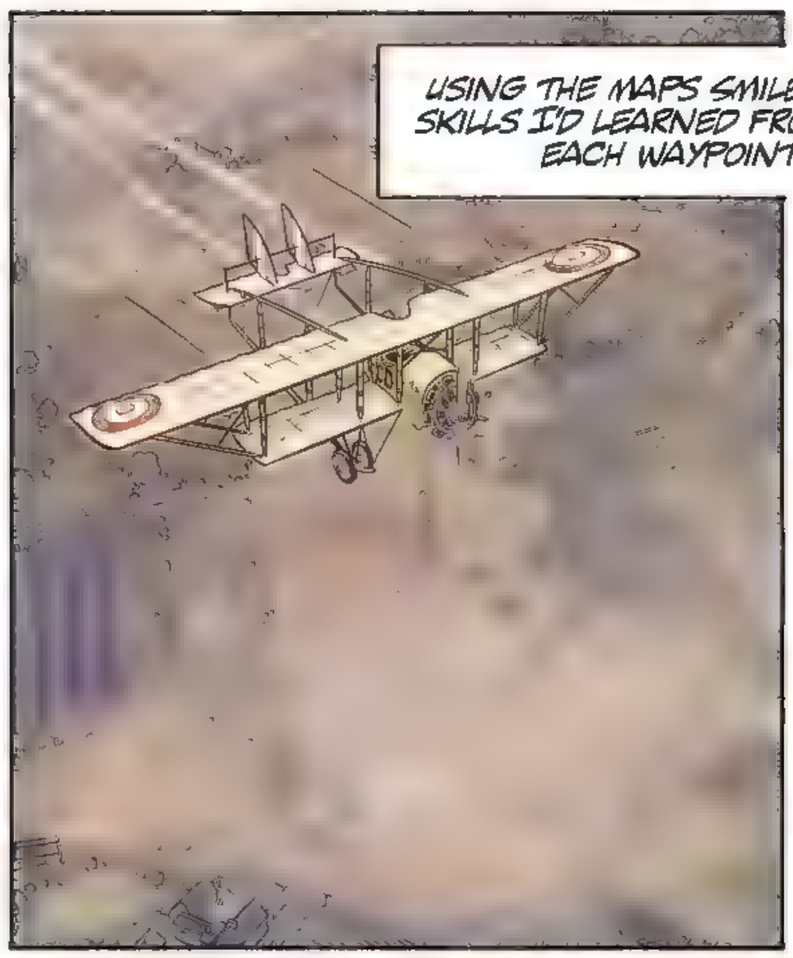

AND SO, THE BIG DAY FINALLY ARRIVED.

ONCE AGAIN, MY HEART STARTED THUMPING AS I STARTED THE ENGINE, AND THEY ACCELERATED IN UNISON! NEEDING REASSURANCE, I LOOKED TO ADÈLE.

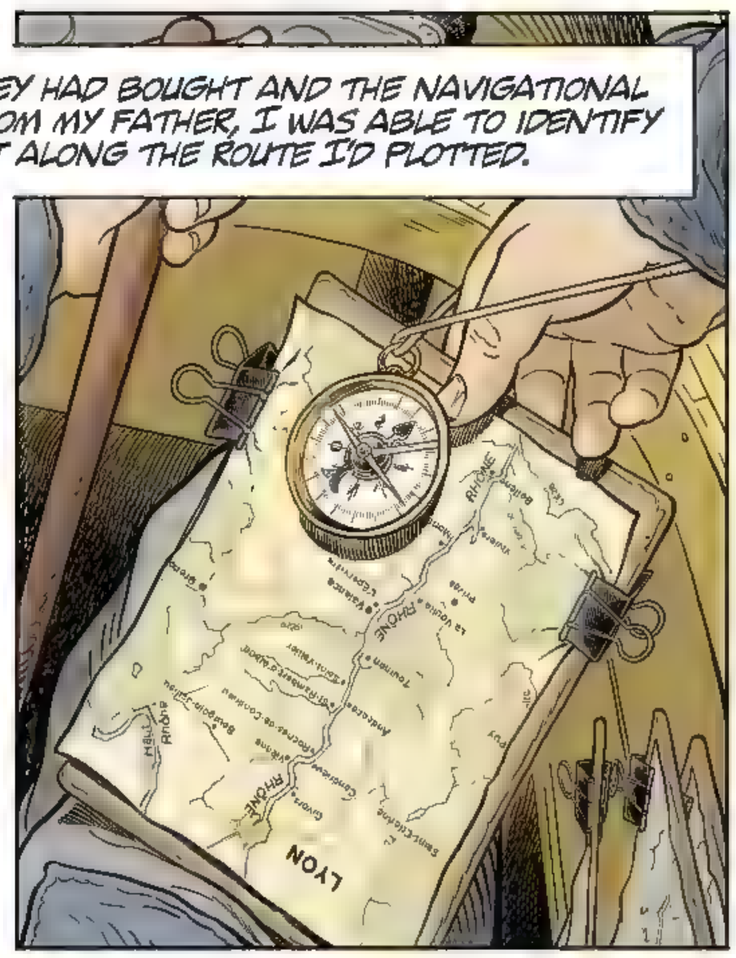

WHY WAS IT THAT I ONLY REALLY SAW HER AT SUCH MOMENTS?

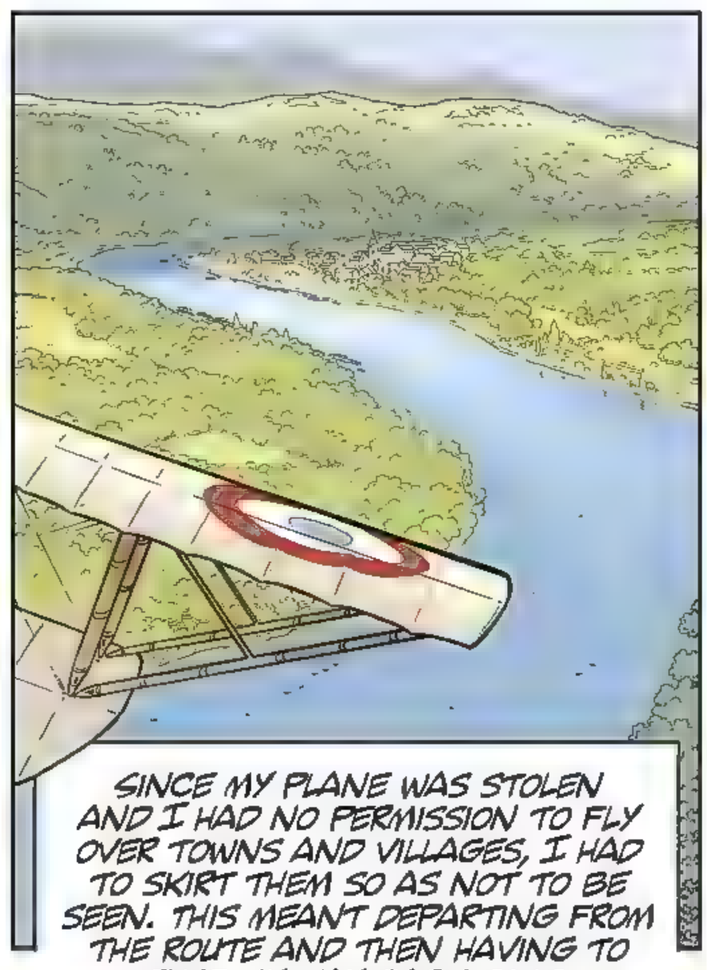


(1) IN 1919.

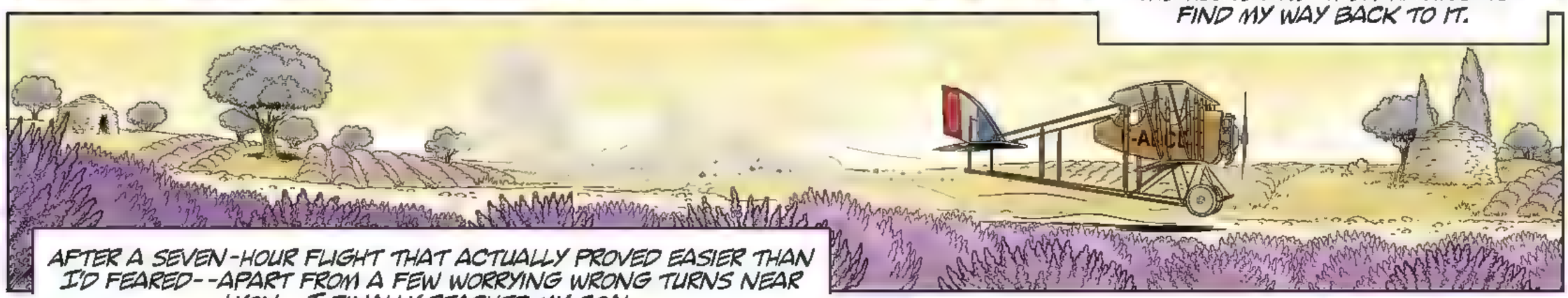


USING THE MAPS SMILEY HAD BOUGHT AND THE NAVIGATIONAL SKILLS I'D LEARNED FROM MY FATHER, I WAS ABLE TO IDENTIFY EACH WAYPOINT ALONG THE ROUTE I'D PLOTTED.

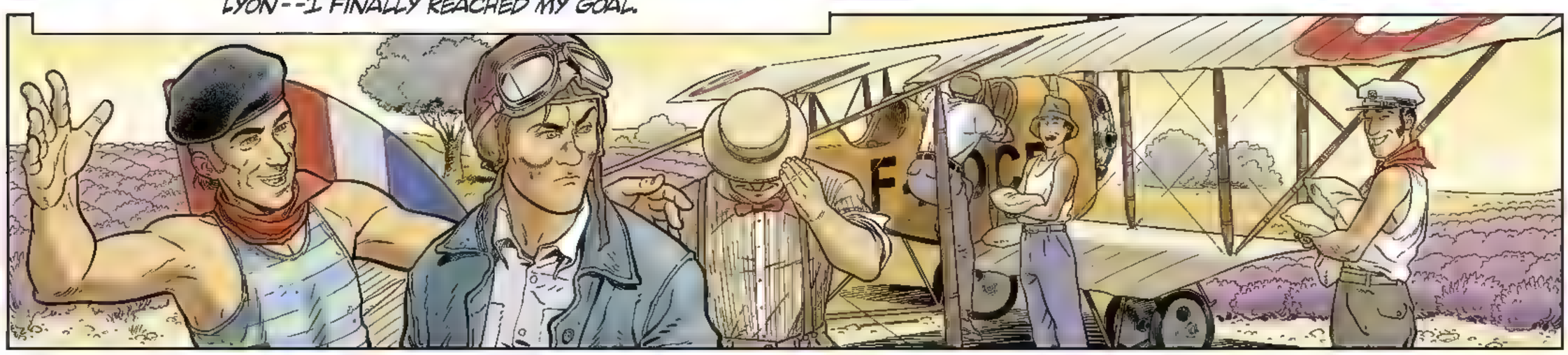


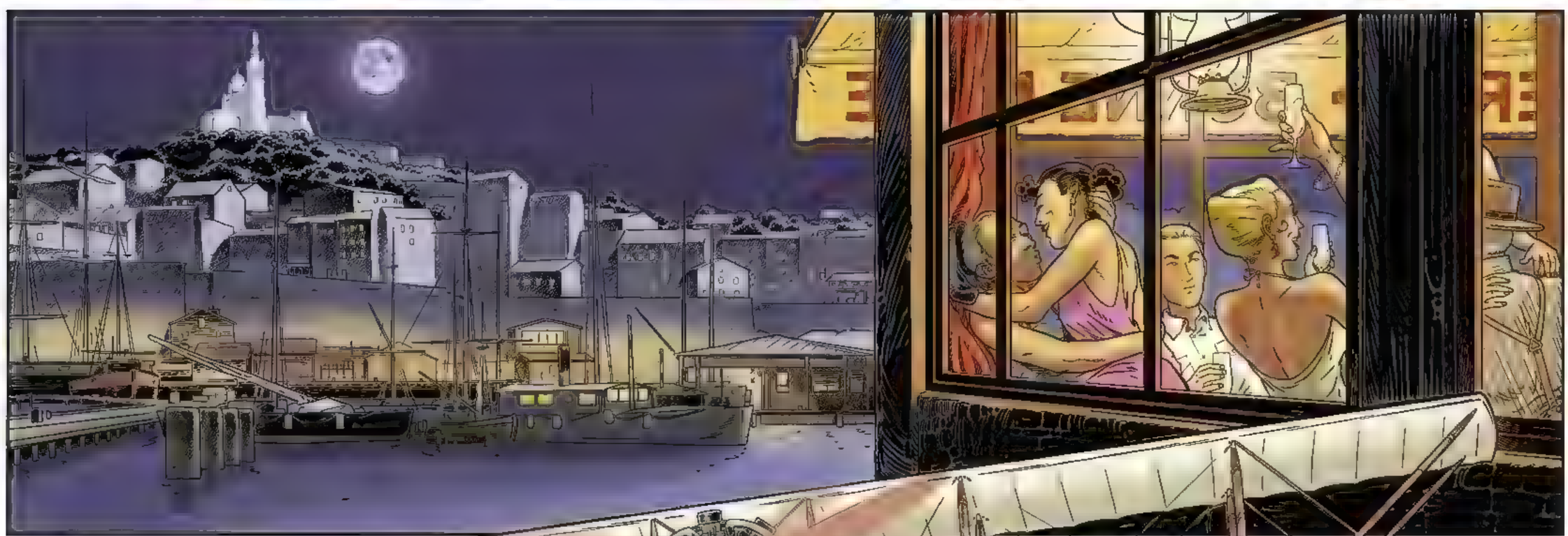


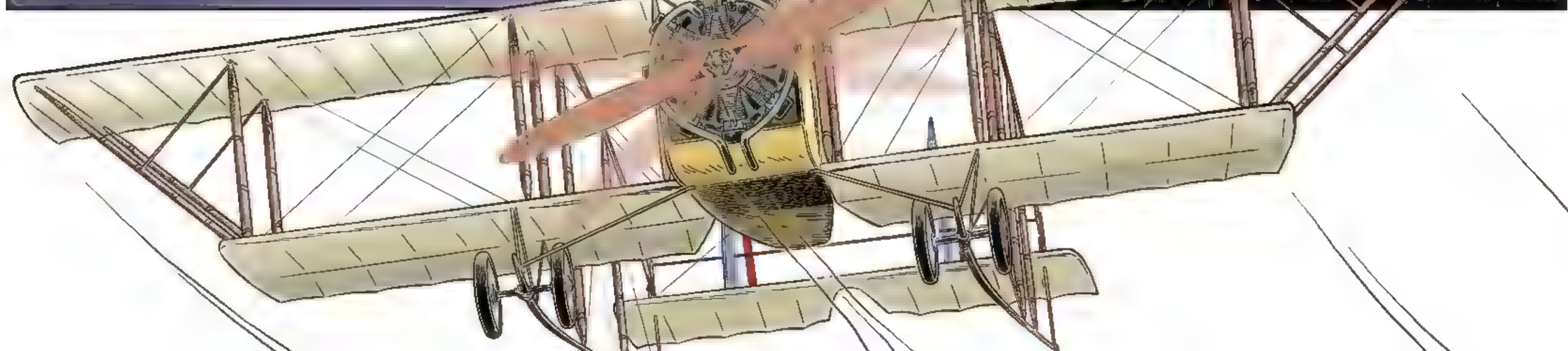
SINCE MY PLANE WAS STOLEN AND I HAD NO PERMISSION TO FLY OVER TOWNS AND VILLAGES, I HAD TO SKIRT THEM SO AS NOT TO BE SEEN. THIS MEANT DEPARTING FROM THE ROUTE AND THEN HAVING TO FIND MY WAY BACK TO IT.



AFTER A SEVEN-HOUR FLIGHT THAT ACTUALLY PROVED EASIER THAN I'D FEARED--APART FROM A FEW WORRYING WRONG TURNS NEAR LYON--I FINALLY REACHED MY GOAL.







WELL DONE, KID!

THANKS, MR. MILO.

I'LL BE HONEST WITH YOU: I ONLY HALF BELIEVED YOUR STORY, AND MARCEL DIDN'T AT ALL! BUT I WANTED TO GIVE IT A TRY, JUST FOR FUN.

I ALSO WANTED TO SEE IF YOU HAD THE BALLS.

YOU'VE CONVINCED ME, FLYBOY! YOU FLY BACK IN THE MORNING.

IN THE MORNING?

WELL, YEAH! TO GET THE STUFF THIS TIME, OF COURSE!

TO GET THE...? BUT THIS...

IT'S FLOUR! YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK I'D ENTRUST YOU WITH MILLIONS OF FRANCS' WORTH OF PRODUCT WITHOUT BEING SURE YOU COULD PULL IT OFF?

MouHA! HA! HA!

NO!! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

IF THERE'S ONE THING I CAN'T STAND, IT'S PEOPLE NOT TRUSTING ME. I WAS ABSOLUTELY FUMING--ON THE INSIDE, OF COURSE--AS SMILEY BURST OUT LAUGHING.

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

SO DID HIS MEN...

...AND SO DID I, LIKE AN IDIOT!

HA! HA! HA HA HA! HA! HA HA

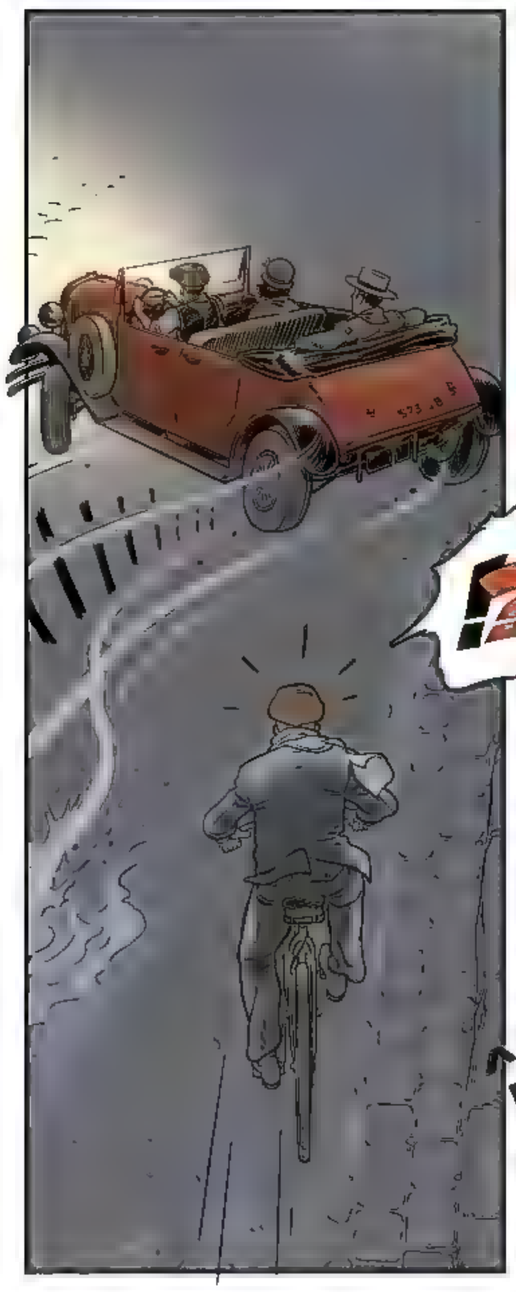
WHAT ELSE COULD I DO?

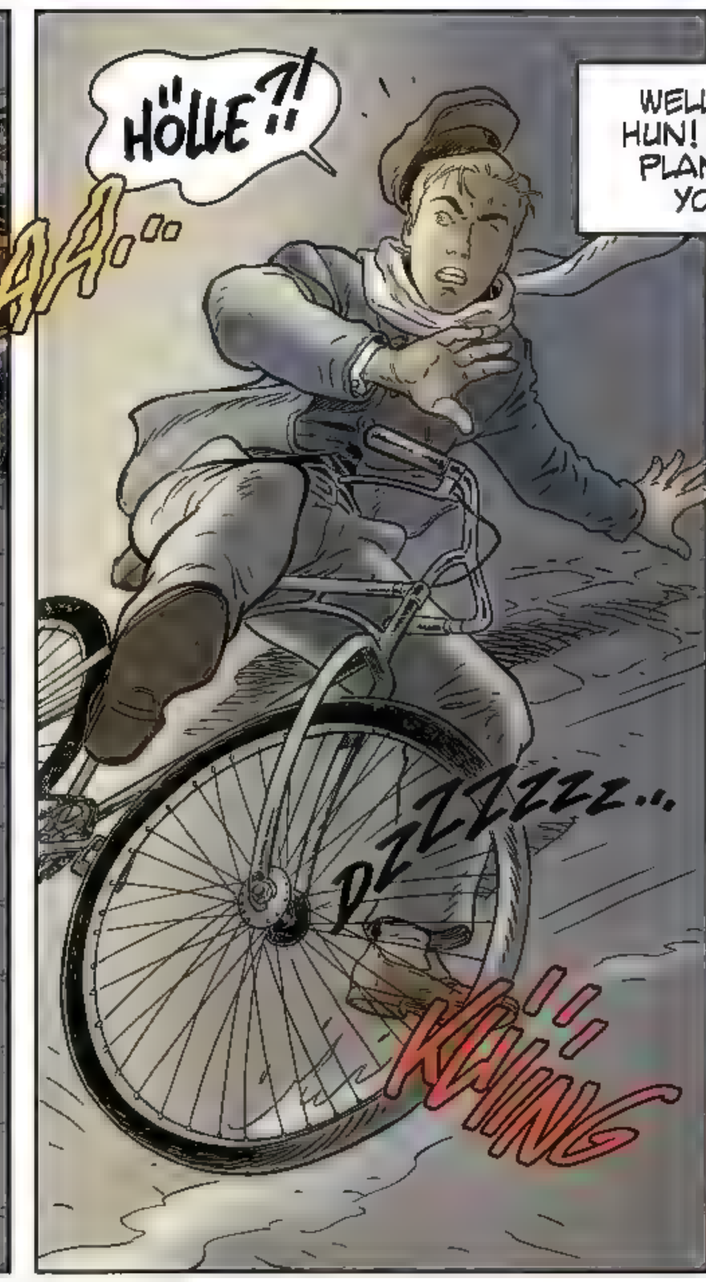
THE SECOND FLIGHT WAS MORE PROBLEMATIC. THICK FOG NEAR AUXERRE MEANT I HAD TO RESORT TO DEAD RECKONING, BUT I DIDN'T HAVE AN ACCURATE CLOCK, SO I HAD TO GUESS THE TIME, WHICH GAVE ME ONLY AN APPROXIMATE POSITION... AND SERIOUS DOUBTS.

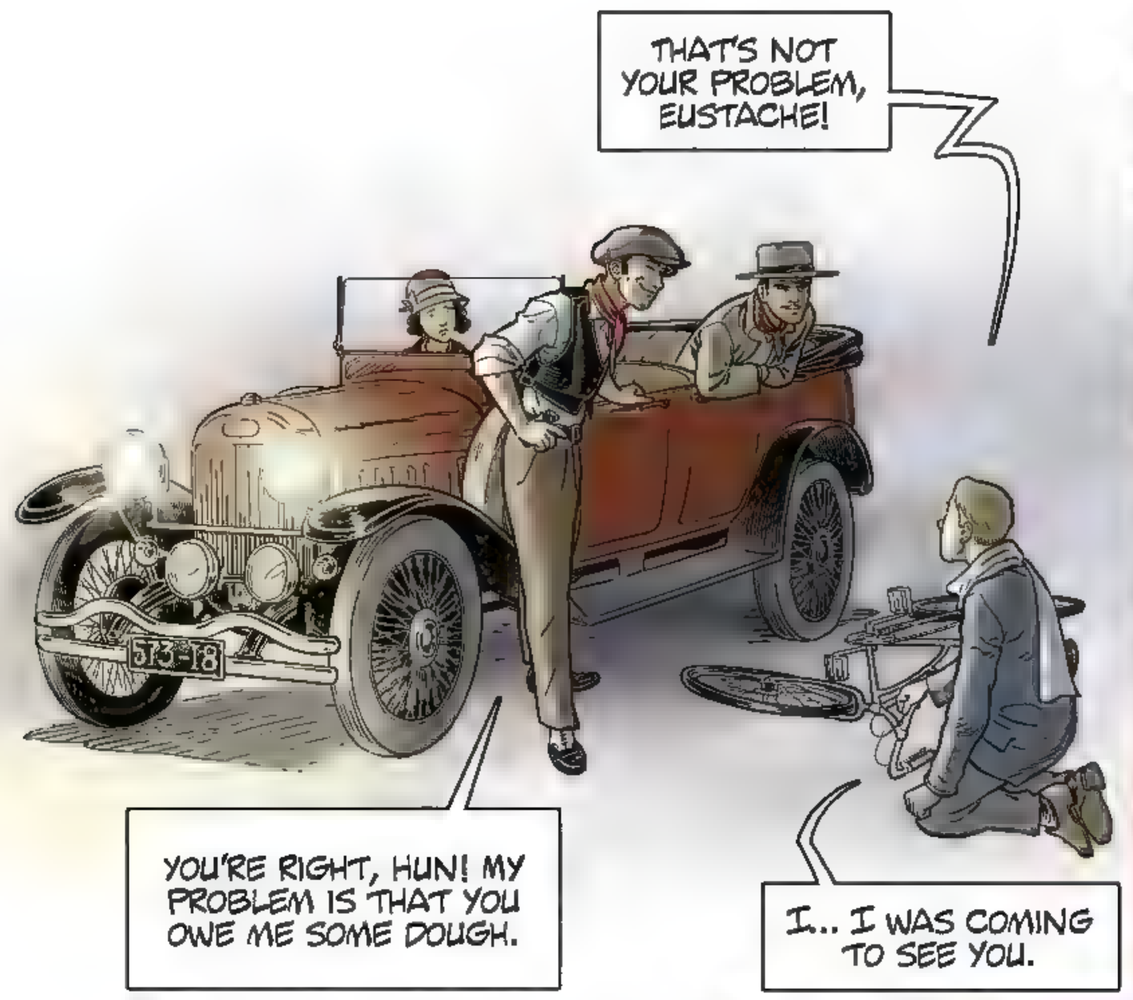
I EVEN HAD TO MAKE A FORCED LANDING!

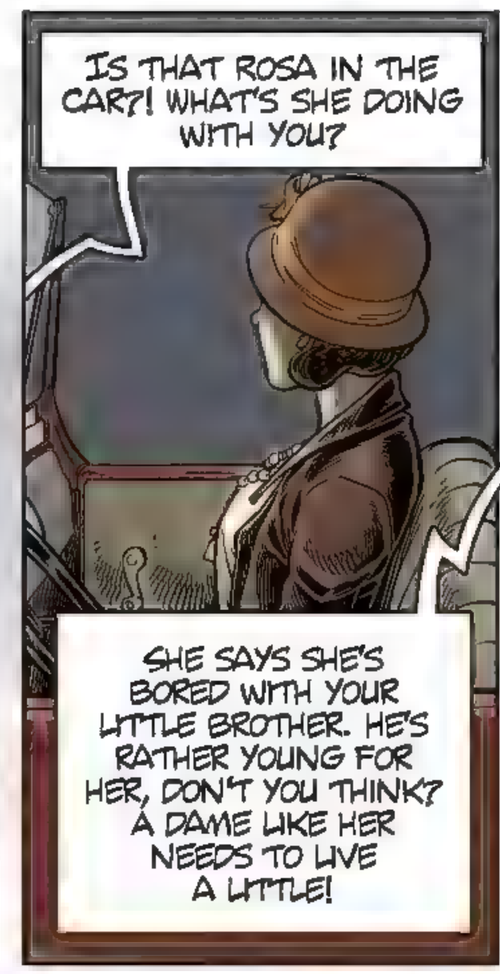
BUT I BROUGHT BACK THE DAMN DRUGS... AND WE CRACKED A BOTTLE OF CHAMPERS.

TOC

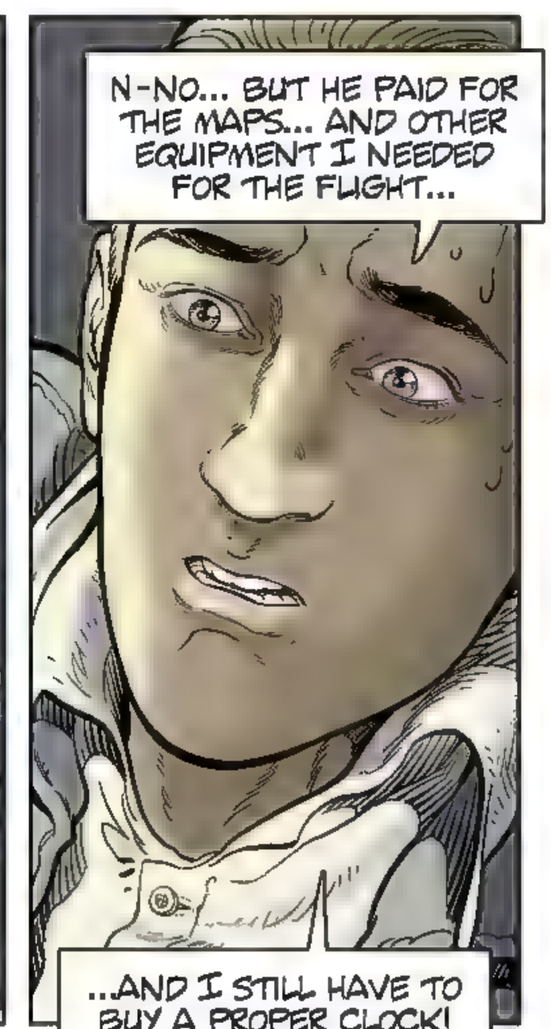








THAT DAMN KNIFE! BEFORE, I'D ALWAYS THOUGHT HE WAS JUST BLUFFING, BUT THIS TIME, IN THE DARK, I COULDN'T DECIDE WHICH WAS SCARIER: HIS LOOK OR THE KNIFE! THEY BOTH CHILLED ME TO THE BONE.



I DON'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT YOUR CLOCK OR YOUR MAPS, HUN! I WANT THREE GRAND PER DELIVERY. OR ELSE!
Y-YOU'LL HAVE IT.

YOU HAVE TWO DAYS! AND I KNOW WHEN YOUR NEXT TRIP IS, SO HERE'S A WORD OF ADVICE: DON'T CROSS ME!
REMEMBER YOUR SISTER...

SORRY, JOSEF, BUT IT'S BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU. I'M NOT GETTING INVOLVED.
HEEEEEY, FRESH LETTUCE!! BEST FRESH LETTUCE!!
TOMAAAA-TOOOES!
EUSTACHE WORKS FOR ME, TOO, AND HE DOES GOOD WORK. WE HAVE RULES, YOU KNOW, A CODE OF HONOR. IF I BREAK THEM, MY REPUTATION GOES UP IN SMOKE.

SO HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO GET HIM OFF MY BACK?
YOU COULD CHALLENGE HIM TO A DUEL, BUT HE WON'T FIGHT YOU WITH HIS FISTS.
YOU ANY GOOD WITH A KNIFE?
N... NO.
THEN FORGET IT. KNIVES ARE HIS SPECIALTY!
GO, GO, GO!
ELEVEN! AMAZING! YOU HAVE THE LUCK OF THE DEVIL, BICEPS!
THE DICE NEVER LIE, MILO, YOU KNOW THAT!
BUT IF HE KILLS ME, YOU'LL LOSE OUT! FOR GOD'S SAKE...
...HE'S THREATENING YOUR INTERESTS, TOO!
WE'D FIND OURSELVES ANOTHER PILOT, DON'T YOU WORRY! THEY CAN'T BE TOO THIN ON THE GROUND, PILOTS ON THE SIDELINES WHO WANT TO MAKE IT BIG?
I LIKE YOU, JOSEF, BUT YOU'RE NOT MY SON AND YOU'RE NOT MY BOSS. YOU CAME TO ME WITH A GOOD IDEA, AND I'M PAYING YOU WELL FOR IT. THAT'S ALL.
IT'S UP TO YOU: DO OR DIE!
THE RAT!!
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, FLYBOY...
...BUT BE SURE NOT TO SAY IT.

YEAH, ROSA SOMETIMES GOES OUT WITHOUT ME, BUT WHAT CAN I DO?

LEAVE HER!

I TOLD YOU BEFORE, SHE'S NOT THE RIGHT GIRL FOR YOU!

I CAN'T. I LOVE HER.

I... I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT HER.

YOU'LL MANAGE.

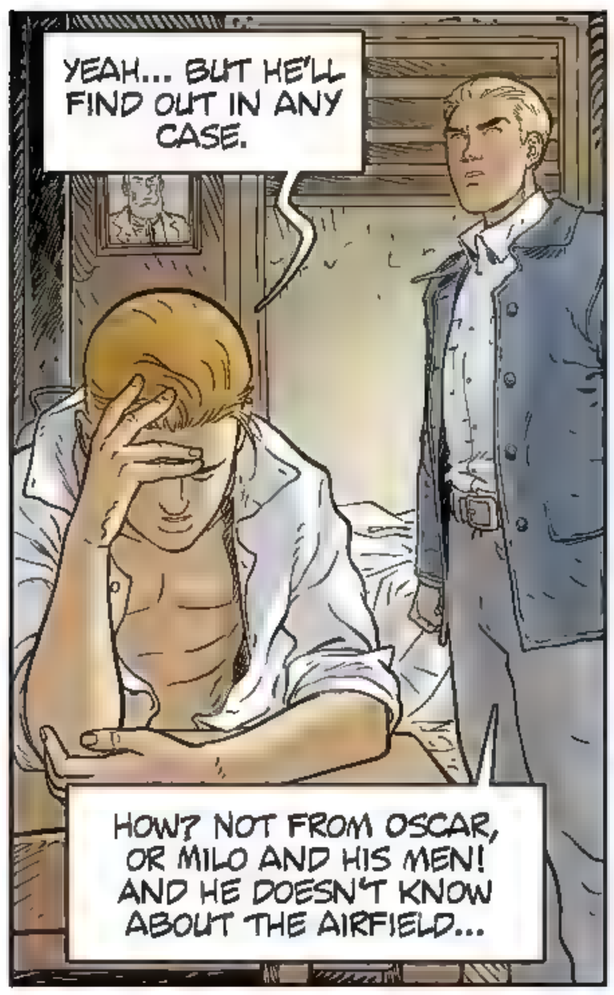
WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T TELL HER I'M FLYING FOR MILO, OK? NOT A WORD!

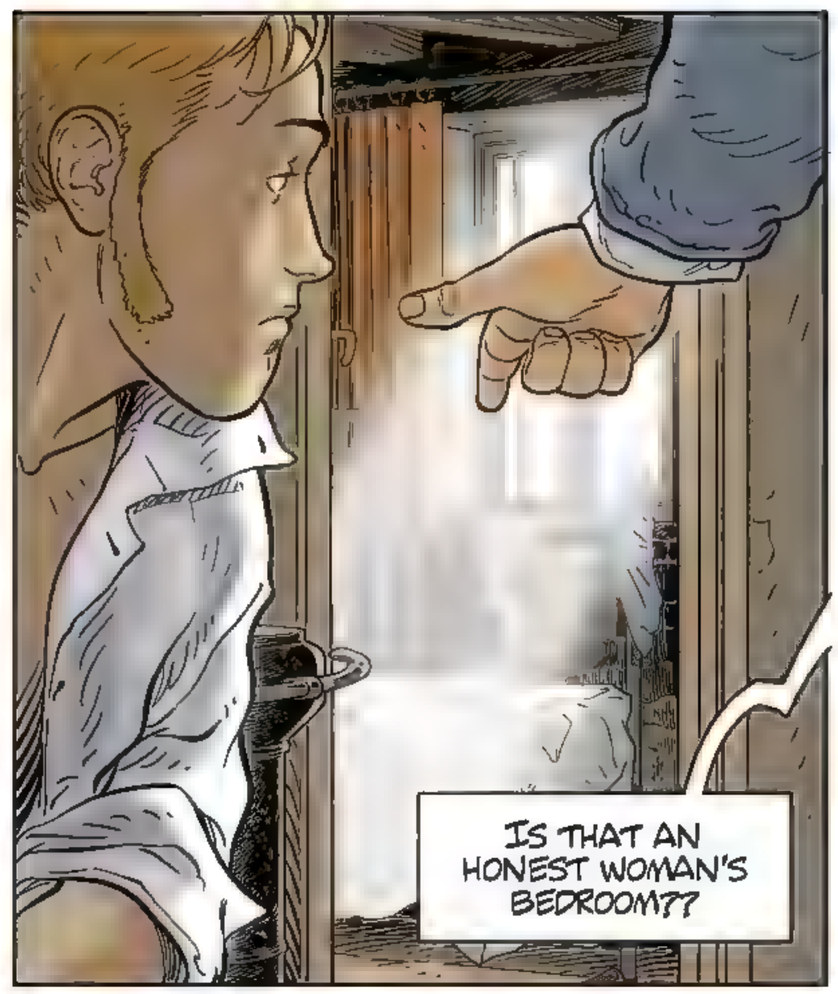
I WON'T... I PROMISE.

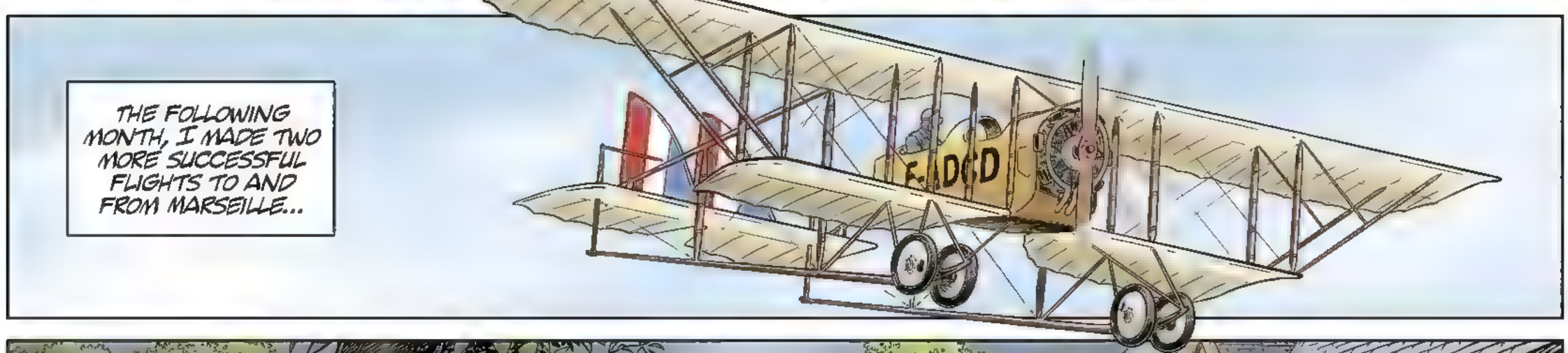
PFFF... WHAT A PIGSTY!

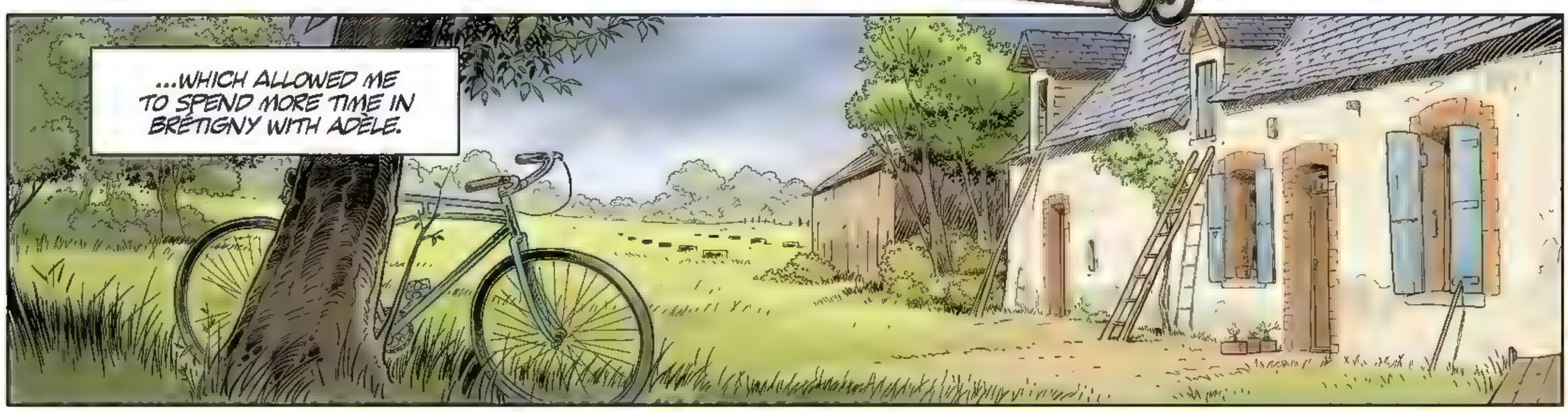
I'M SURE SHE'S GIVING INFO ON US TO EUSTACHE, AND I DON'T INTEND TO PAY HIM FIFTY PERCENT ON EVERY TRIP. I NEED THAT MONEY FOR MOTHER AND FOR MY PILOT'S LICENSE.

YOU GOT THAT, MOSES?

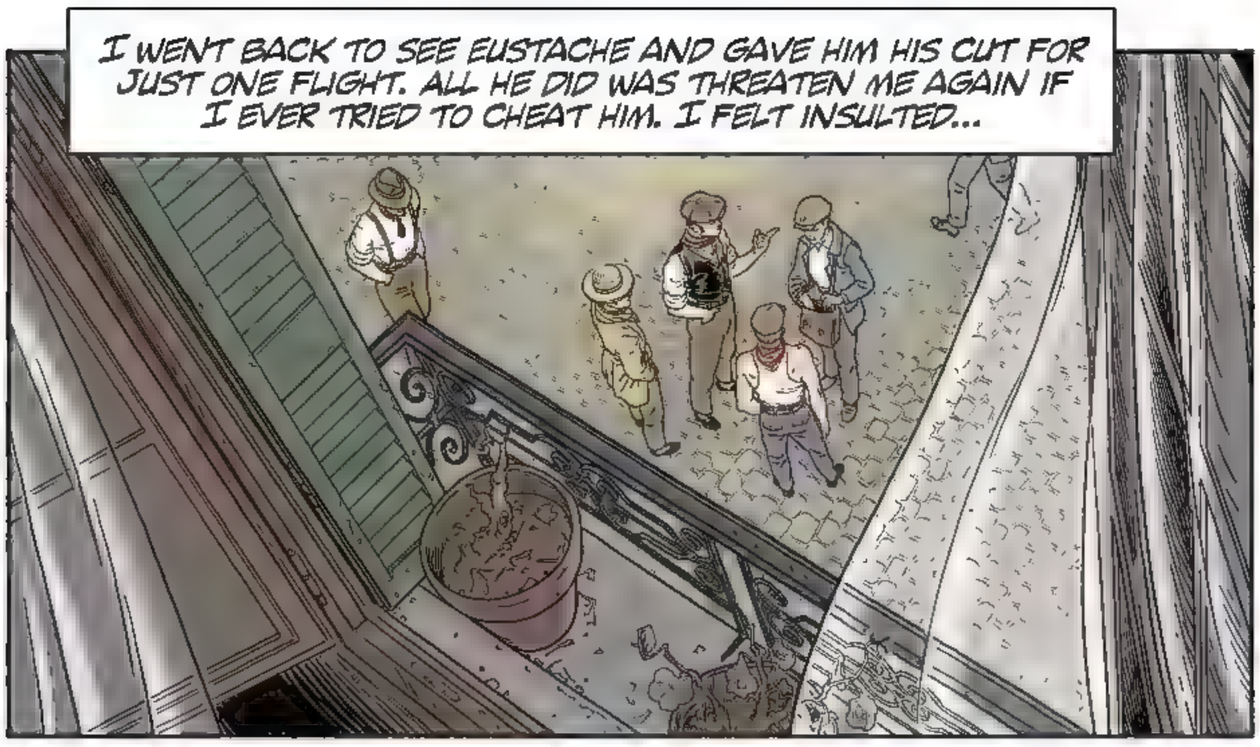


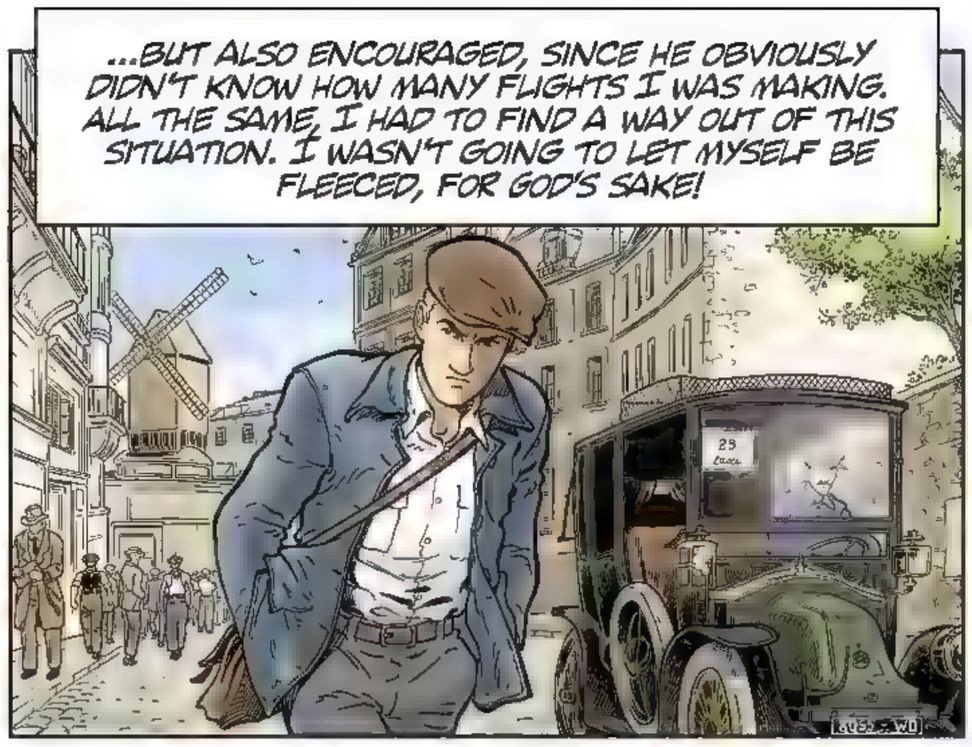


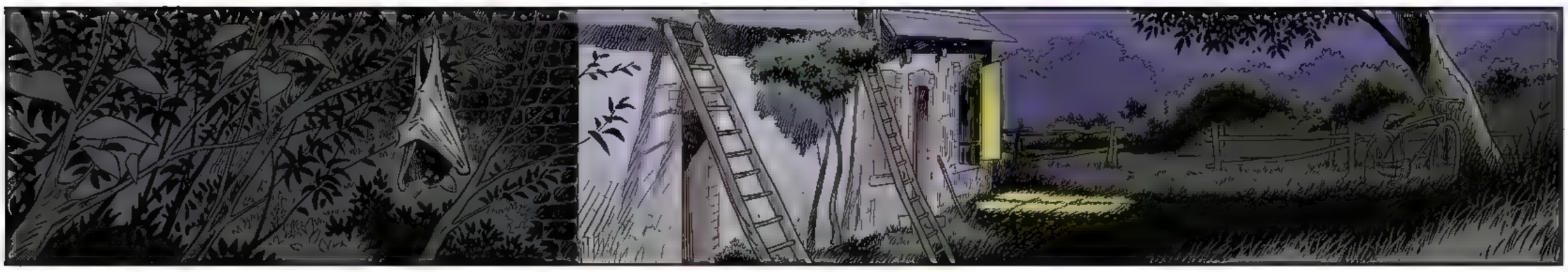


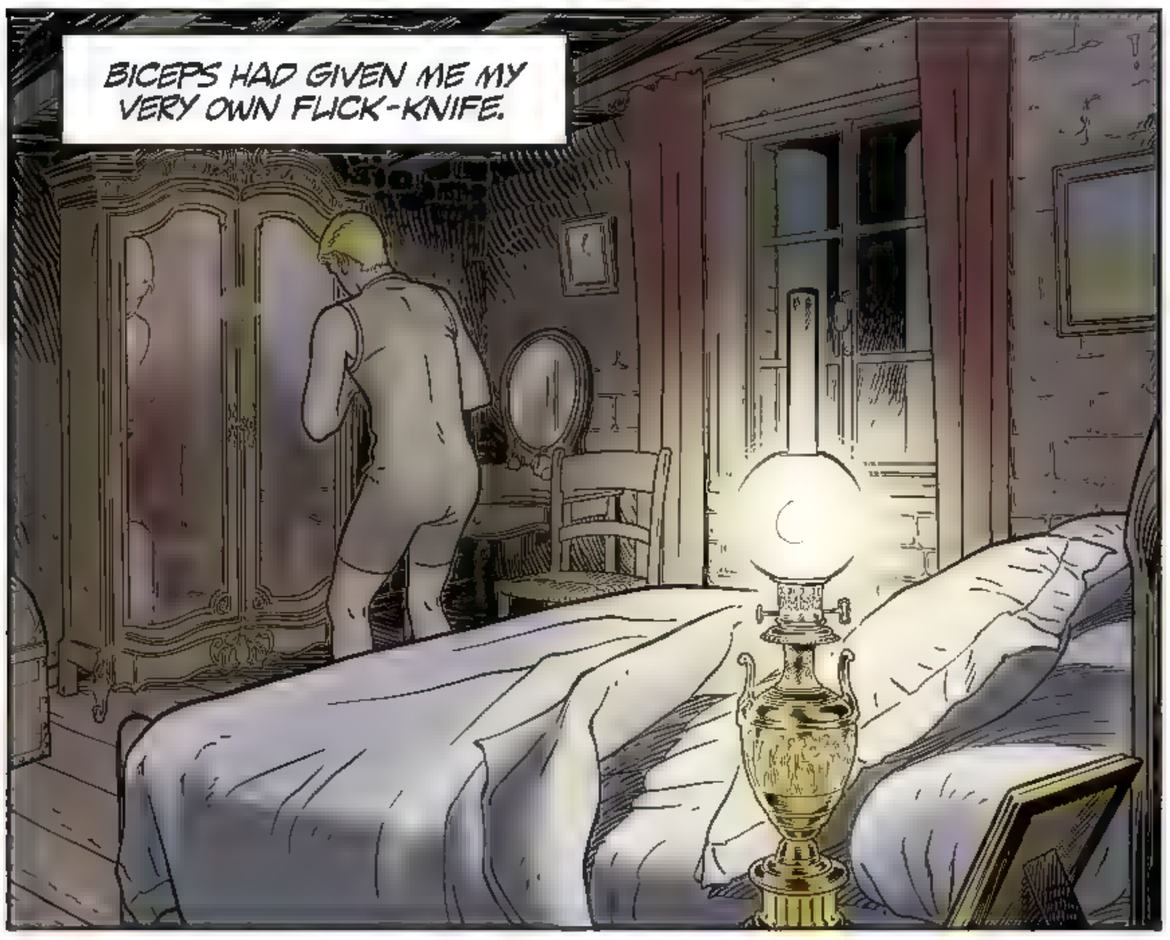


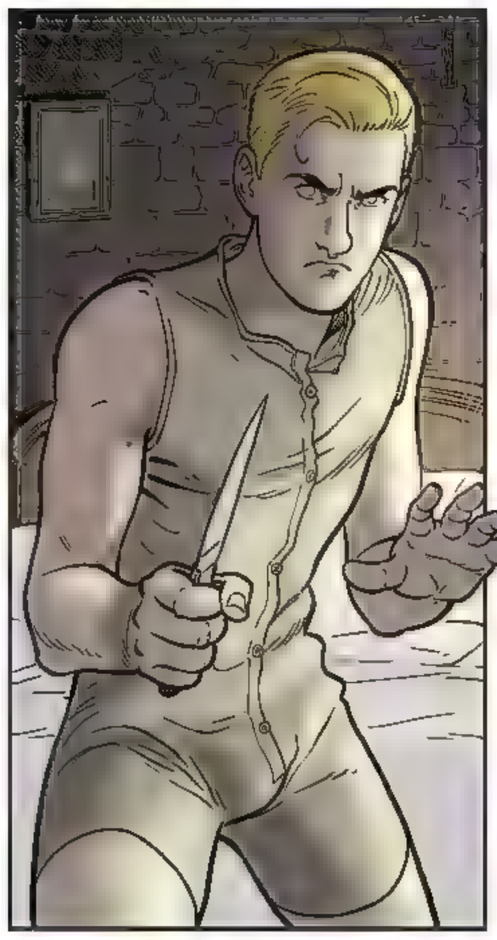
(1) SEE VOLUME 1, "TAKE-OFF."



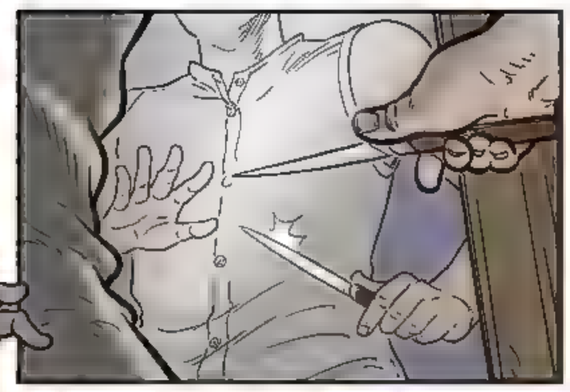


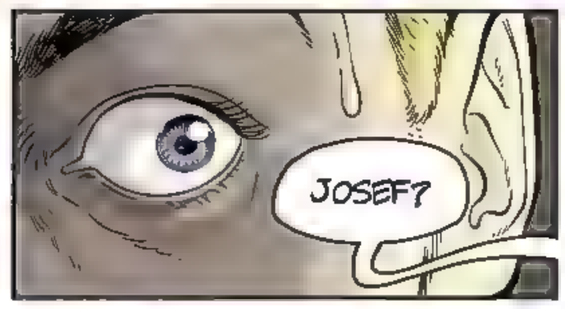


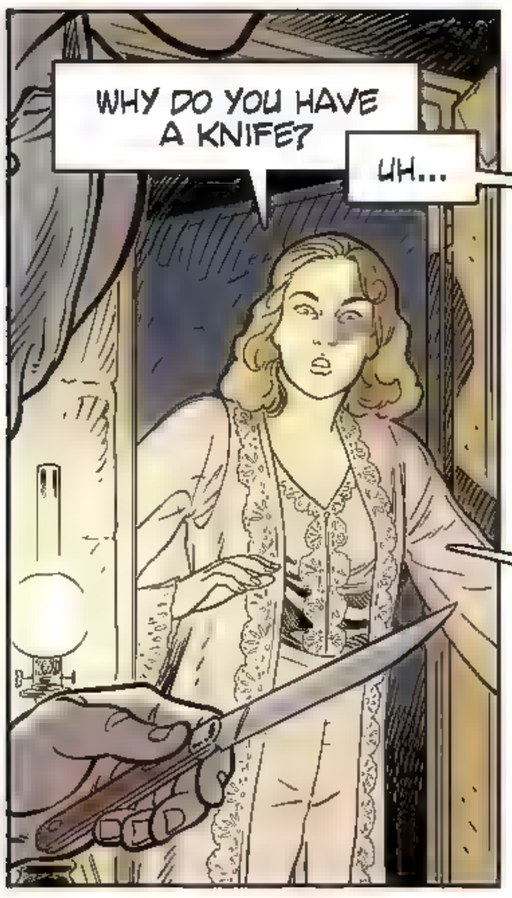


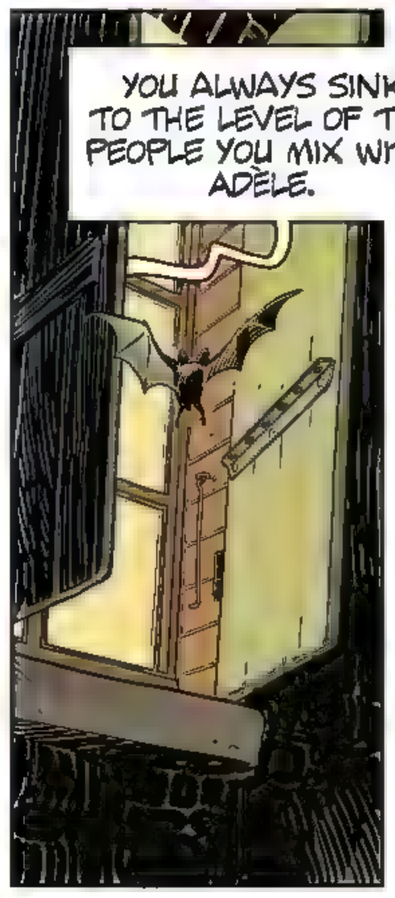


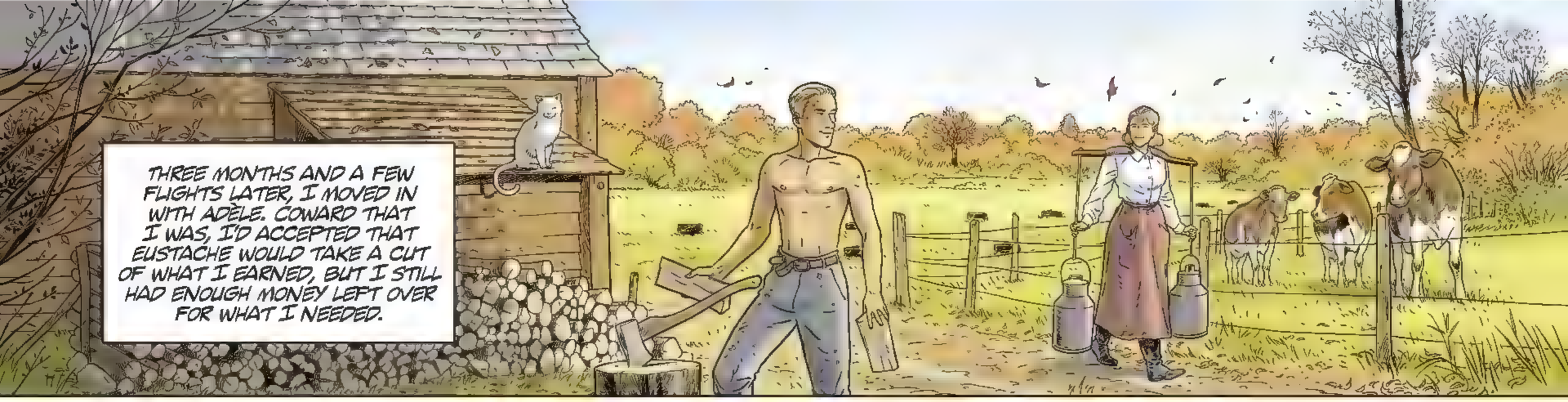
SHIT! JUST THE REFLECTION OF THE BLADE WAS ENOUGH TO GIVE ME THE HEEBIE-JEEBIES. I COULD ALREADY FEEL IT SLICING INTO MY GUTS. SO TO CHALLENGE EUSTACHE...?

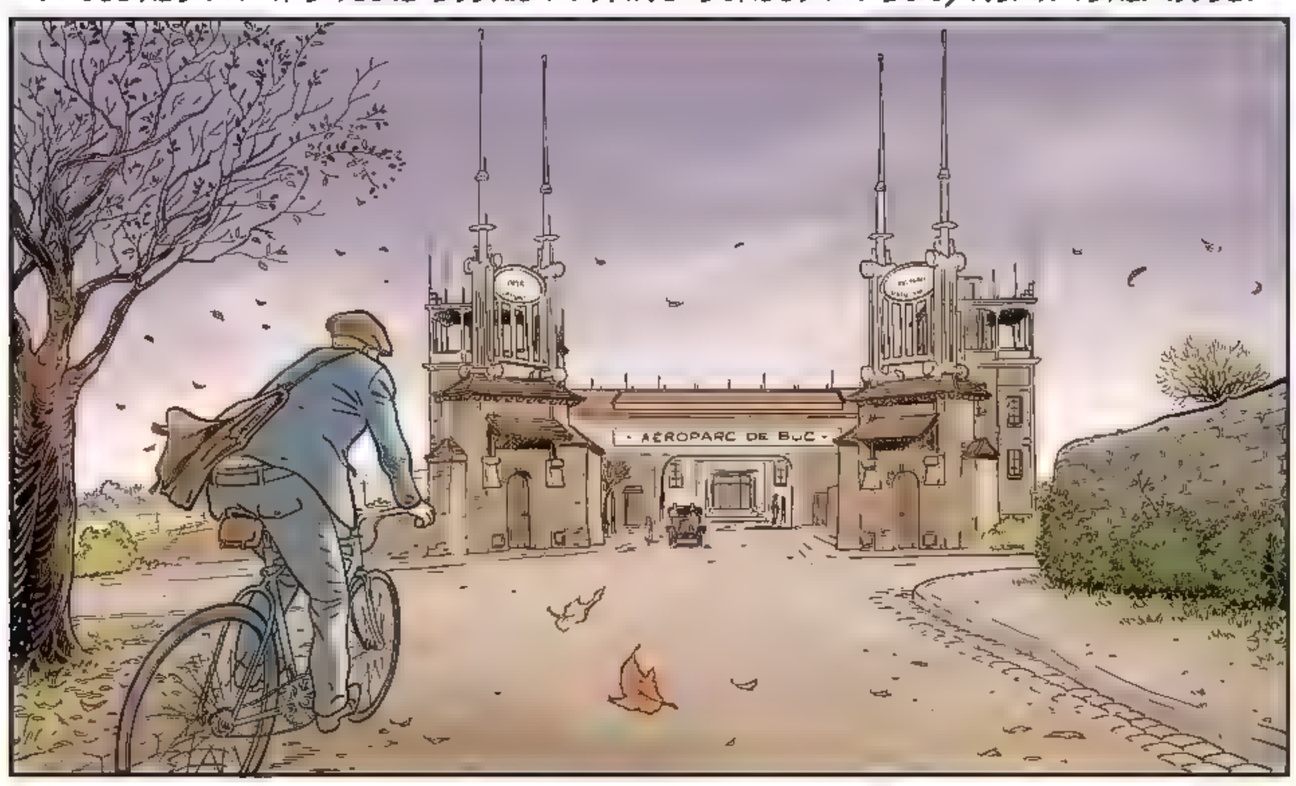




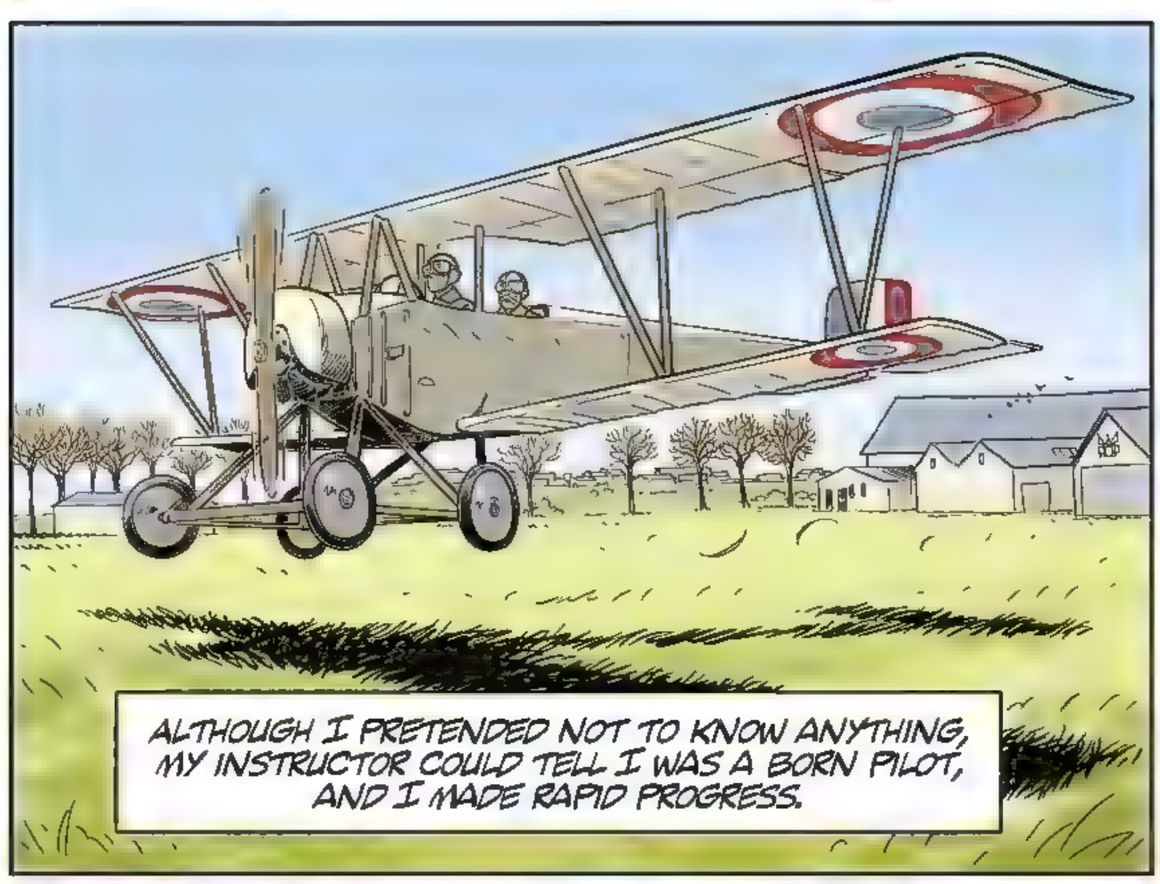


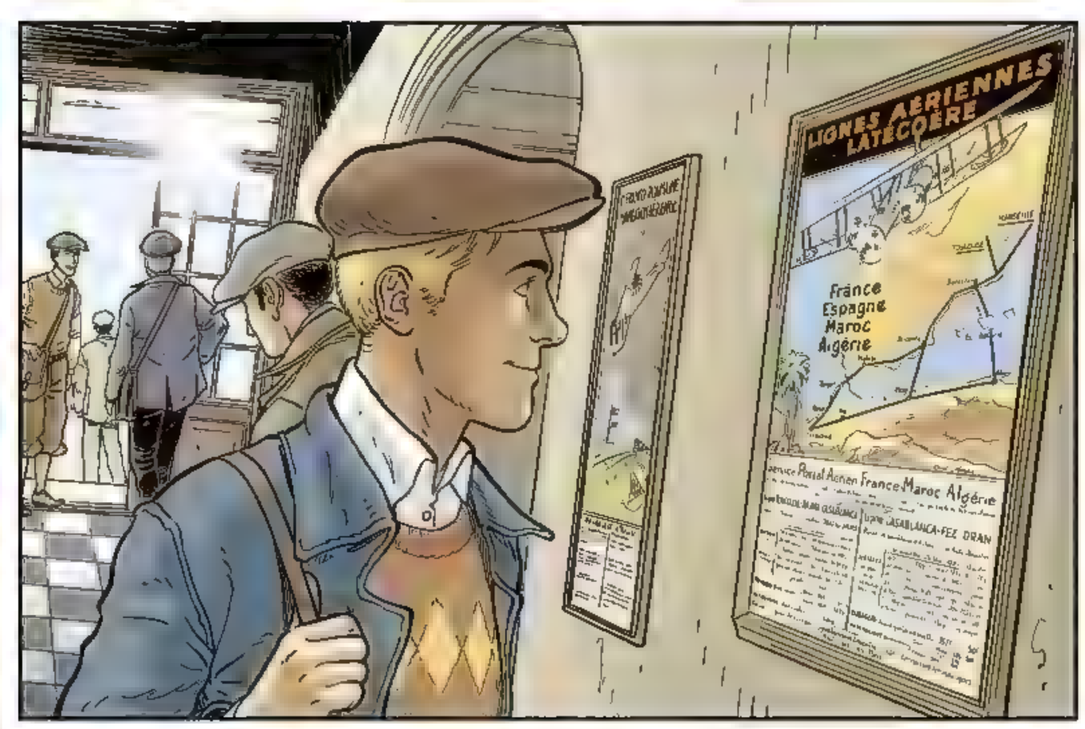


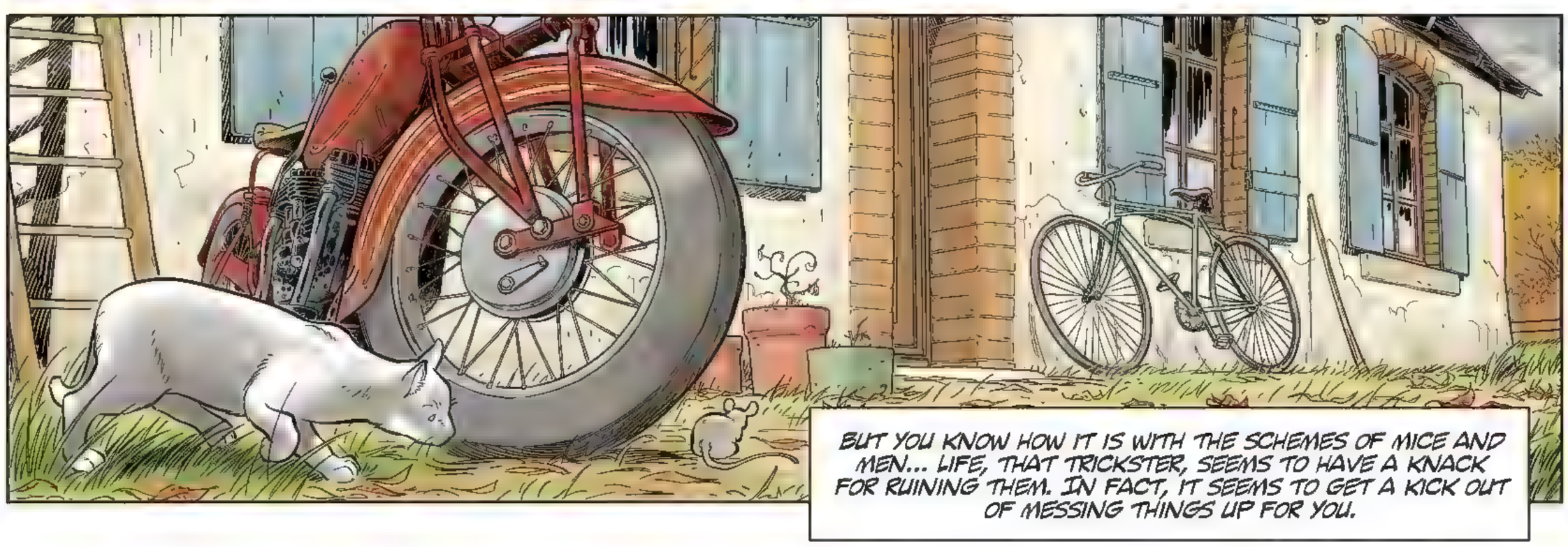

THREE MONTHS AND A FEW FLIGHTS LATER, I MOVED IN WITH ADÈLE. COWARD THAT I WAS, I'D ACCEPTED THAT EUSTACHE WOULD TAKE A CUT OF WHAT I EARNED, BUT I STILL HAD ENOUGH MONEY LEFT OVER FOR WHAT I NEEDED.

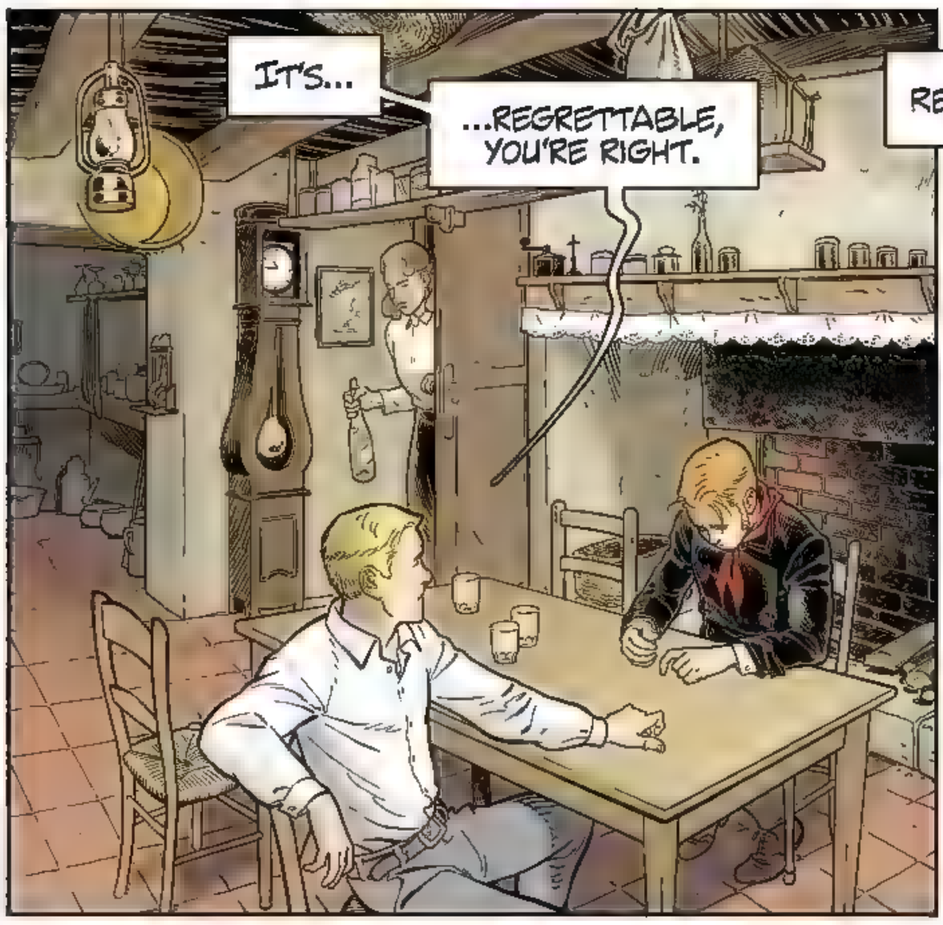

MY FAMILY WAS ABLE TO STAY IN MY UNCLE'S APARTMENT IN ISSY-LES-MOULINEAUX, AND I PACKED IN MY JOB AT THE CAUDRON FACTORY TO TAKE A COURSE AT THE LOUIS BLÉRIOT FLYING SCHOOL AT BUC, NEAR VERSAILLES.
AÉROPARC DE BUC

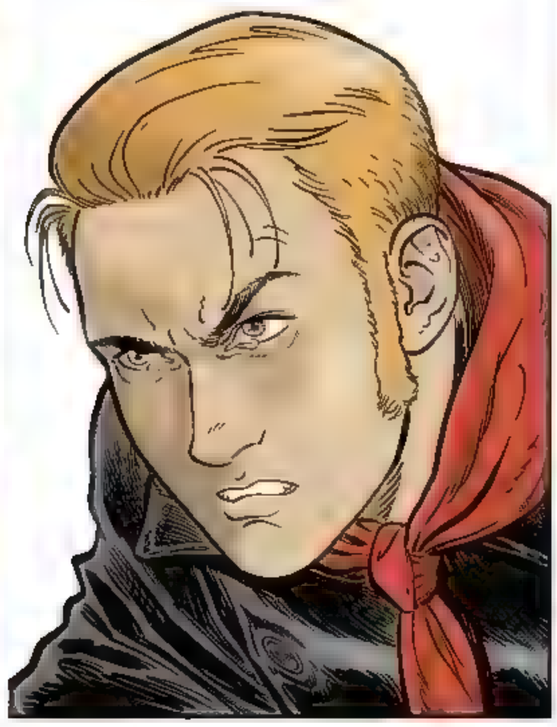
NO ONE KNEW ME, SO I CLAIMED I WAS THE SON OF A WEALTHY STORE OWNER WHO WAS NUTS ABOUT FLYING.


ALTHOUGH I PRETENDED NOT TO KNOW ANYTHING, MY INSTRUCTOR COULD TELL I WAS A BORN PILOT, AND I MADE RAPID PROGRESS.


LIGNES AÉRIENNES LATÉCOÈRE
France
Espagne
Maroc
Algérie
Service Postal Aérien France-Maroc Algérie
HAVING SAILED THROUGH MY FIRST EXAM, I SIGNED UP FOR A LICENSE TO FLY PASSENGER PLANES. VERY FEW PILOTS HAD ONE, AND IT WOULD OPEN THE DOOR TO ALL THE NEW AIRLINES THAT WERE SPRINGING UP. MY ULTIMATE DREAM!


BUT YOU KNOW HOW IT IS WITH THE SCHEMES OF MICE AND MEN... LIFE, THAT TRICKSTER, SEEMS TO HAVE A KNACK FOR RUINING THEM. IN FACT, IT SEEMS TO GET A KICK OUT OF MESSING THINGS UP FOR YOU.


IT'S...
...REGRETTABLE, YOU'RE RIGHT.


REGRETTABLE?
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

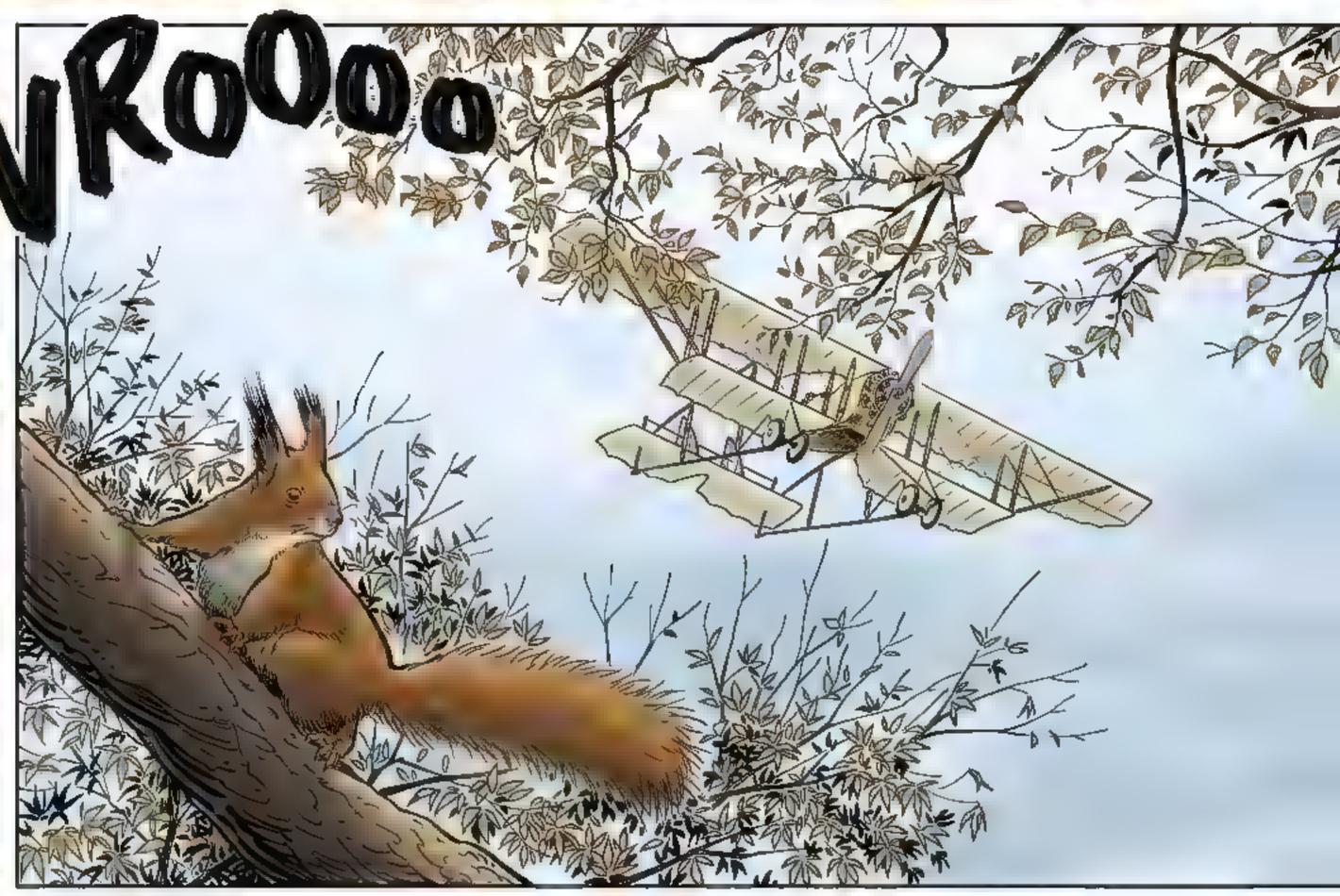
IT'S REVOLTING, THAT'S WHAT IT IS!! I LOVE HER!
?
I WAS GONNA MARRY HER!

CALM DOWN, MOSES! IT WOULD'VE BEEN REVOLTING IF SHE'D BEEN AN HONEST WOMAN, BUT A TEASE LIKE THAT?
WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? DIDN'T I WARN YOU?

IT'S THAT BASTARD EUSTACHE WHO SEDUCED HER, WITH HIS CAR, AND HIS FANCY SUITS, AND HIS DOUGH! BUT I KNOW SHE DOESN'T LOVE HIM. IT'S ME SHE LOVES!
LIKE I SAID, SHE'S A FLIRT AND IT'S REGRETTABLE! YOU CAN DO BETTER, MOSES. FORGET HER!

I'M GONNA--
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING, MOSES!

I'M FLYING TOMORROW. STAY HERE WITH ADÈLE, AND WE'LL TALK SOME MORE WHEN I GET BACK.
ALL RIGHT?
...


VROOOO

I GOT TO MARSEILLE OK, BUT THEN THE WORST MISTRAL IMAGINABLE BLEW IN AND GROUNDED ME FOR THREE DAYS.

I SAW IT AS A BAD OMEN, AND OF COURSE I STARTED WORRYING ABOUT MOSES...

...AND ADÈLE, WHO HAD NO TELEPHONE!

WHERE'S MOSES? I DON'T SEE HIM.

UH... WELL... YOU SEE...

WHAT??

UH... IT'S NOT GOOD NEWS, I'M AFRAID, JOSEF.

SPIT IT OUT!

UH... MOSES... HE...

HE CHALLENGED EUSTACHE TO A DUEL AT THE CAMP IN SAINT-OUEN...

I FELT THAT SUDDEN CHILL THAT RUNS DOWN YOUR SPINE AND INTO YOUR STOMACH LIKE A GLASS OF ICE WATER, LEAVING YOUR HEAD EMPTY AND SILENTLY ECHOING... JUST LIKE THE TIME MY FATHER TOLD ME THAT SILKE WAS DEAD...

IS... IS HE...?

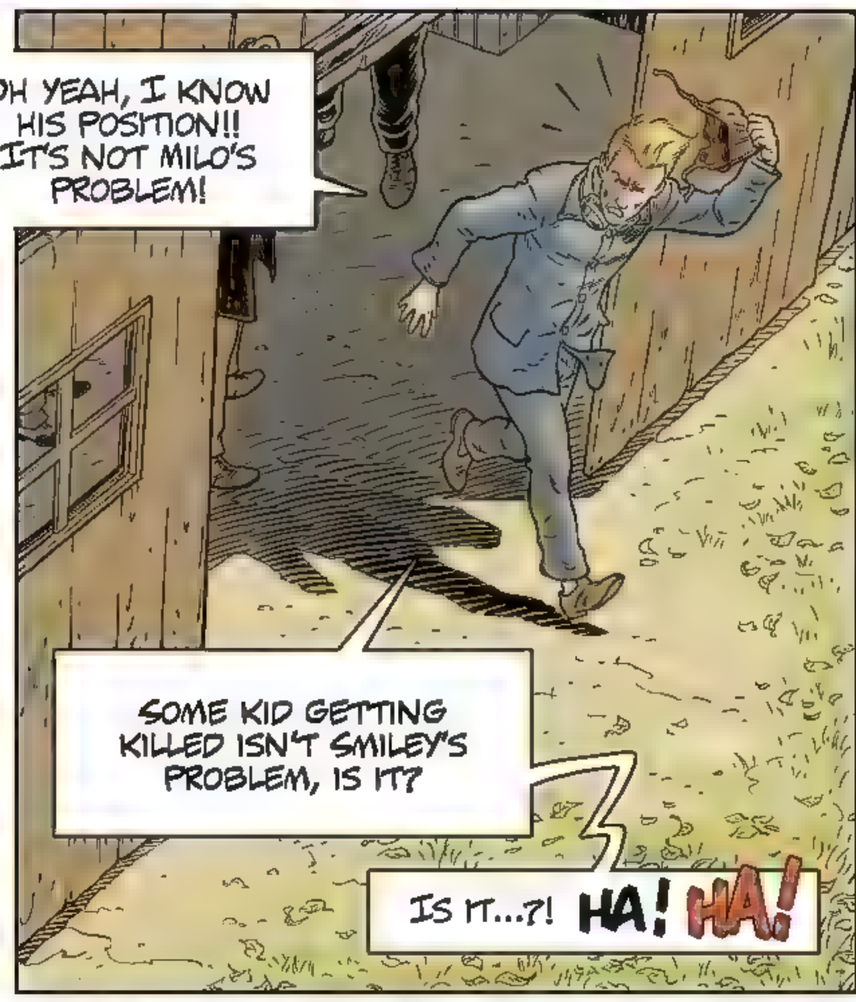
I DON'T KNOW.

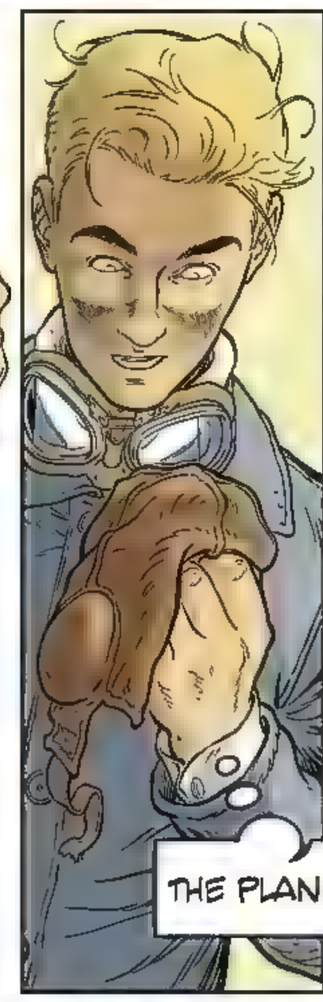
THEY'RE FIGHTING RIGHT NOW.
SCHEISSE!! WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO?! I'M GOING--
IT'S TOO LATE, JOSEF. BY THE TIME YOU GET OVER THERE...

HE'S HAD IT, THEN!

WHY ON EARTH DID YOU LET HIM DO IT?
GOT'T!
YOU SHOULD'VE STOPPED--
BICEPS?!

I HEARD JUST BEFORE I CAME HERE.
IN ANY CASE, I WOULDN'T HAVE INTERVENED. YOU KNOW MILO'S POSITION.


OH YEAH, I KNOW HIS POSITION!! IT'S NOT MILO'S PROBLEM!
SOME KID GETTING KILLED ISN'T SMILEY'S PROBLEM, IS IT?
IS IT...?! HA! HA!

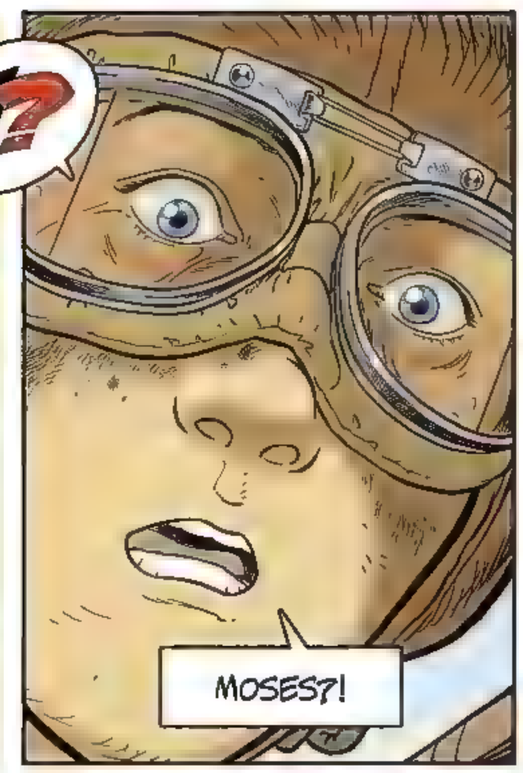

THE PLANE!

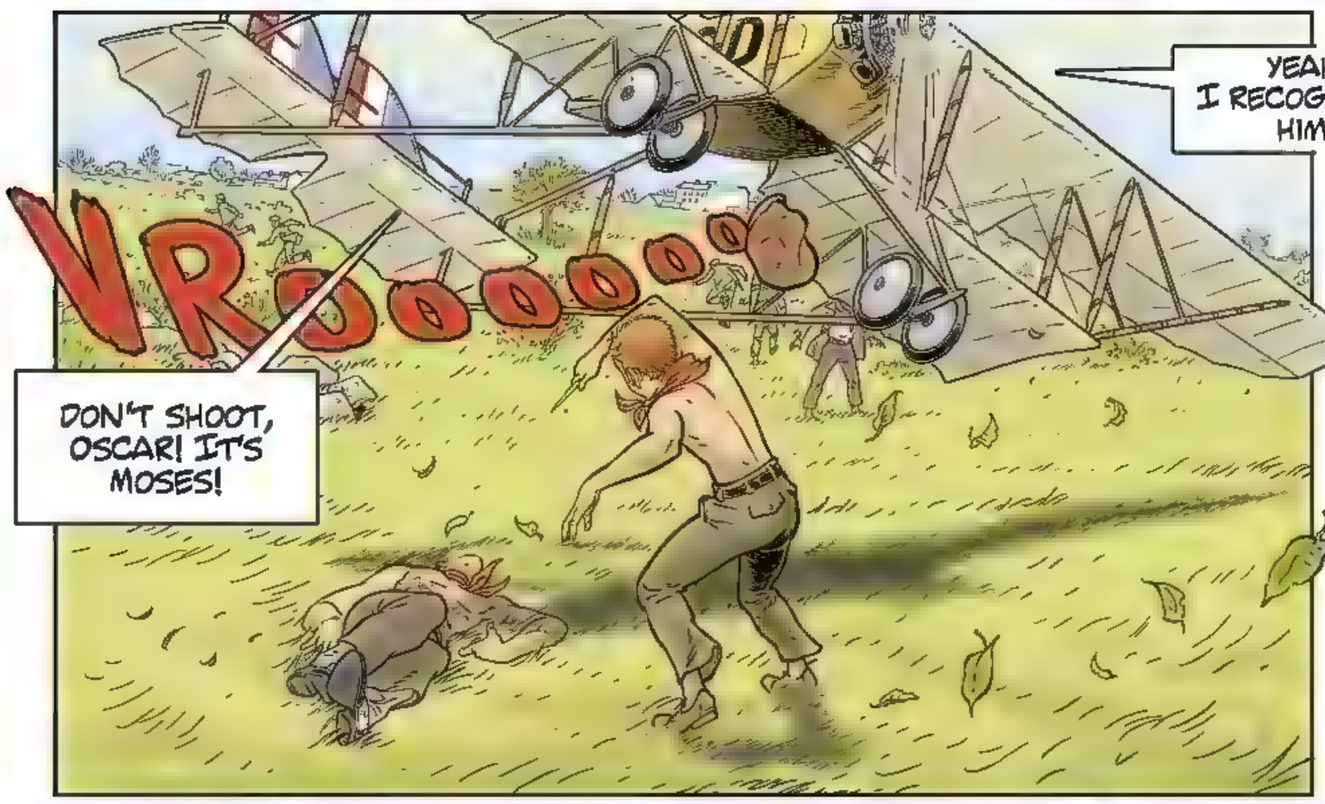
OPEN THE BARN DOORS! NOW!
JOSEF, YOU'RE NOT--?
UNLOAD THE STUFF! QUICK!
IT'S TOO LATE, KID!

MILO WON'T LIKE IT...
TO HELL WITH MILO! IT'S NOT HIS PLANE. I'LL DO WHAT I WANT!
?!

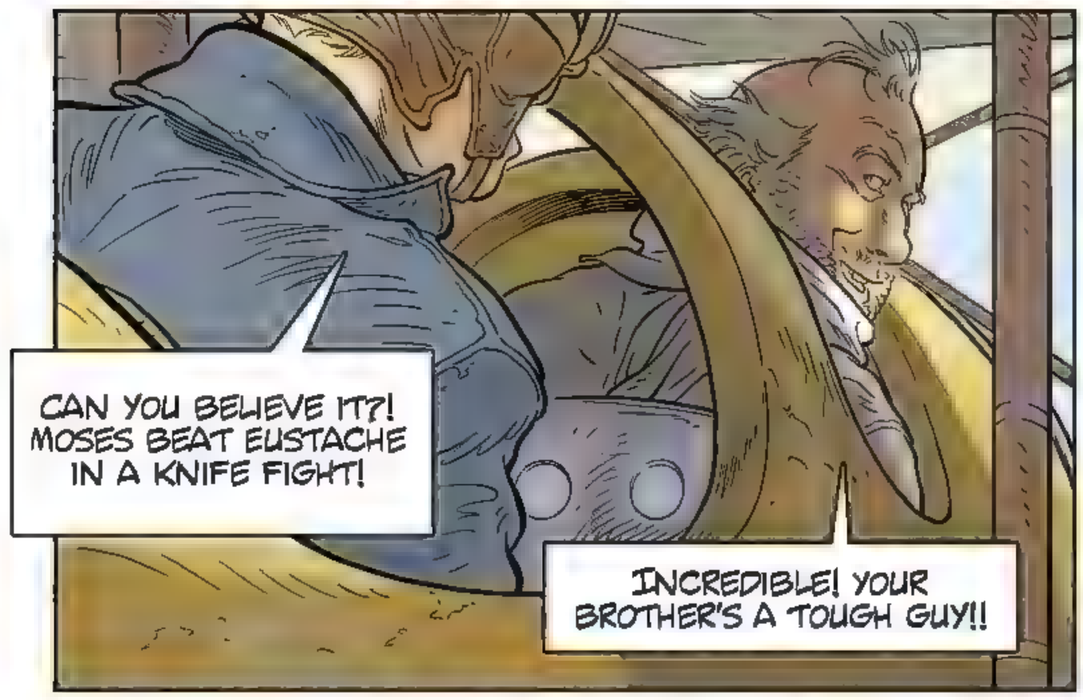
HE'S RIGHT, BICEPS. IT'S OUR PLANE, AND I'M GOING WITH HIM.
GIVE ME YOUR SHOOTER!

IT WAS RISKY, BUT TO SAVE TIME I DECIDED TO FLY STRAIGHT ACROSS PARIS--A CITY I NOW KNEW LIKE THE BACK OF MY HAND.
NAVIGATING BY ITS FAMOUS BUILDINGS, I EASILY FOUND WHERE THE DUEL WAS TAKING PLACE...
A LA CHASSE DORÉE
M.L. BARDIN
...OR RATHER, HAD JUST FINISHED!
MOSES WAS LYING ON THE GRASS.
MEIN GOTT!!
MY BROTHER! MY LITTLE BROTHER, WHO I SHOULD HAVE PROTECTED, WHO I'D LEFT TO DIE!
OSCAR! I'LL BRING HER AROUND. YOU TAKE DOWN THAT SCUMBAG EUSTACHE!
NO PROBLEM!


!?
MOSES?!


VROOOOOOO
YEAH, I RECOGNIZED HIM!
DON'T SHOOT, OSCAR! IT'S MOSES!

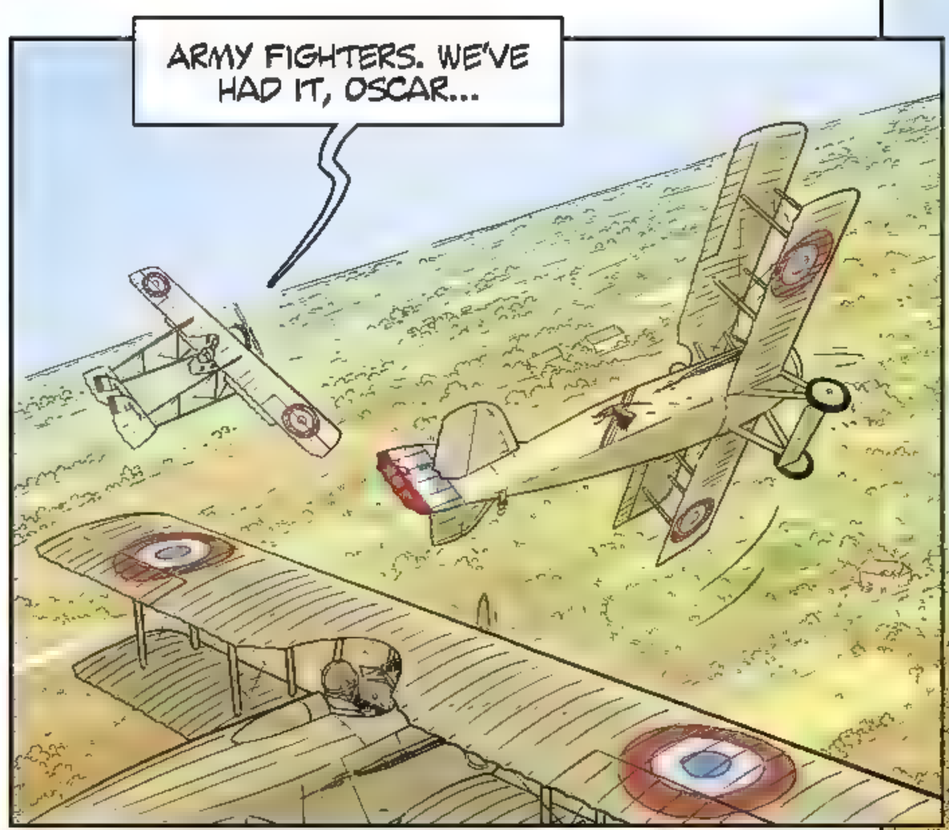
DANKE, HERR!!
F-AD
HE'S STILL ALIVE, OSCAR! HE'S ALIIIIVE!!

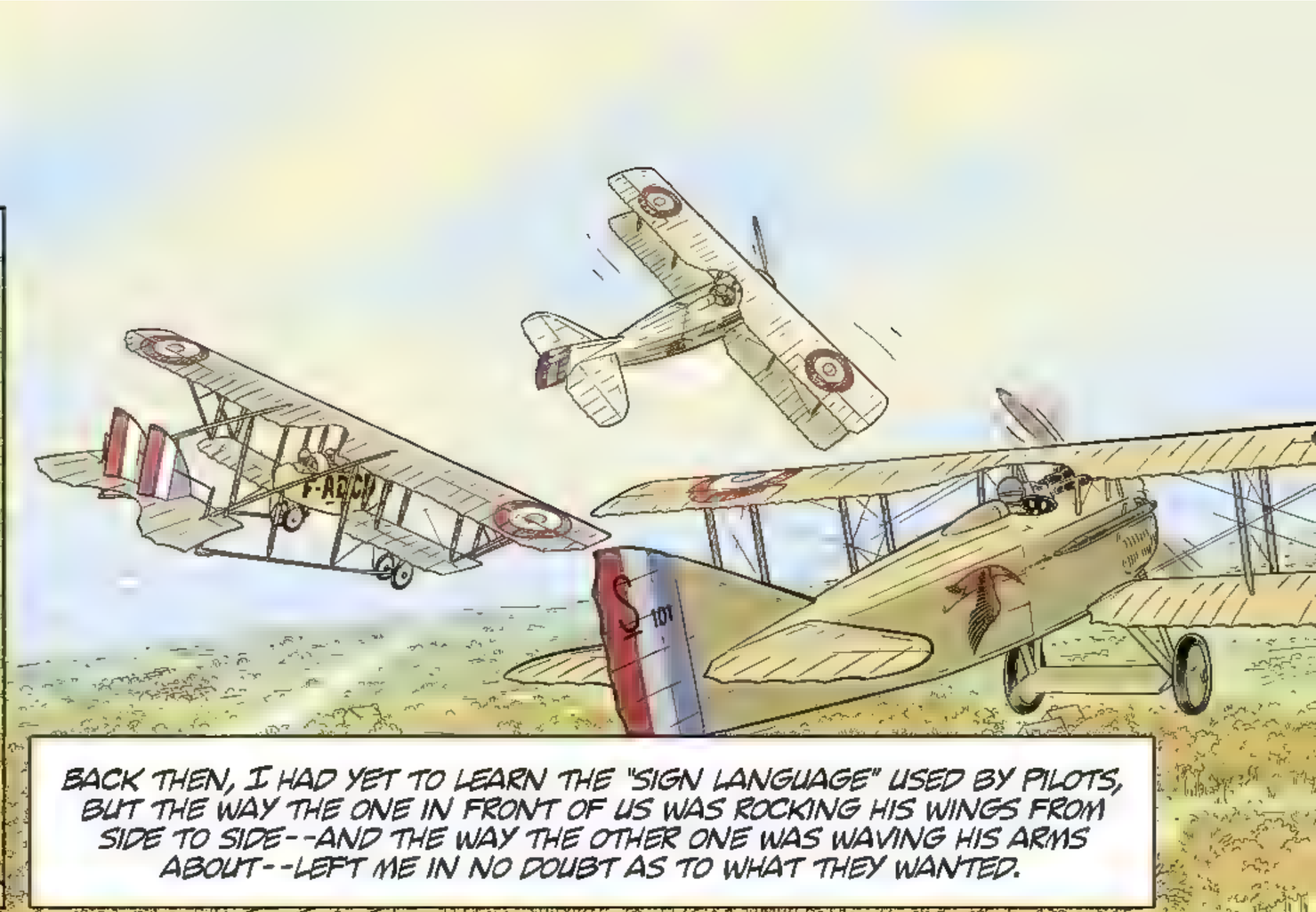

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?! MOSES BEAT EUSTACHE IN A KNIFE FIGHT!
INCREDIBLE! YOUR BROTHER'S A TOUGH GUY!!

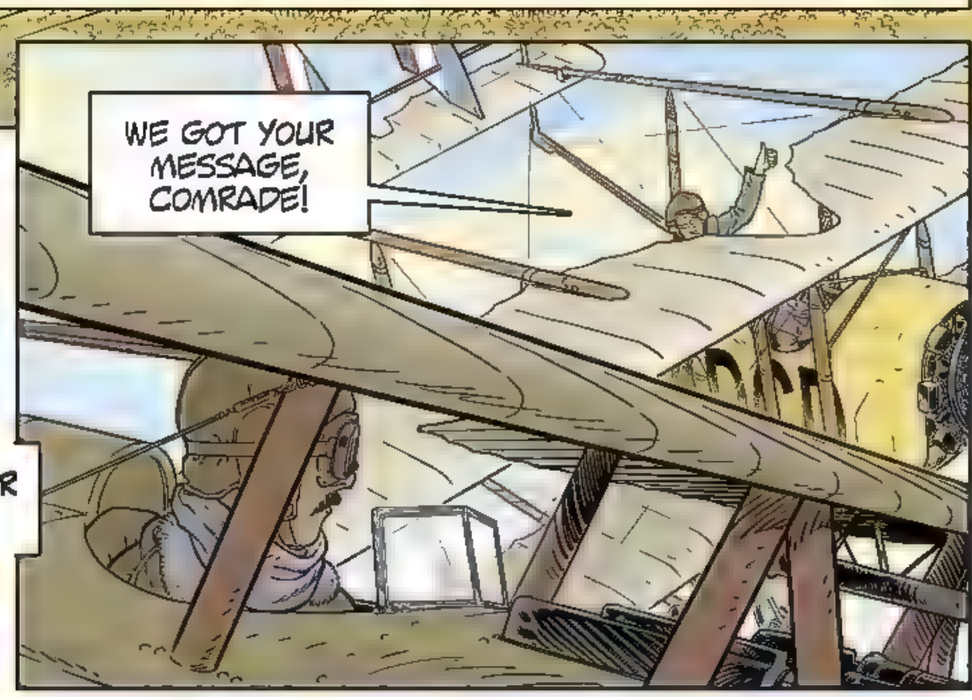
AMAZING! I JUST CAN'T GET OVER IT!
WELL, I'D LIKE TO GET BACK HOME, JOS--
TURN BACK RIGHT NOW!

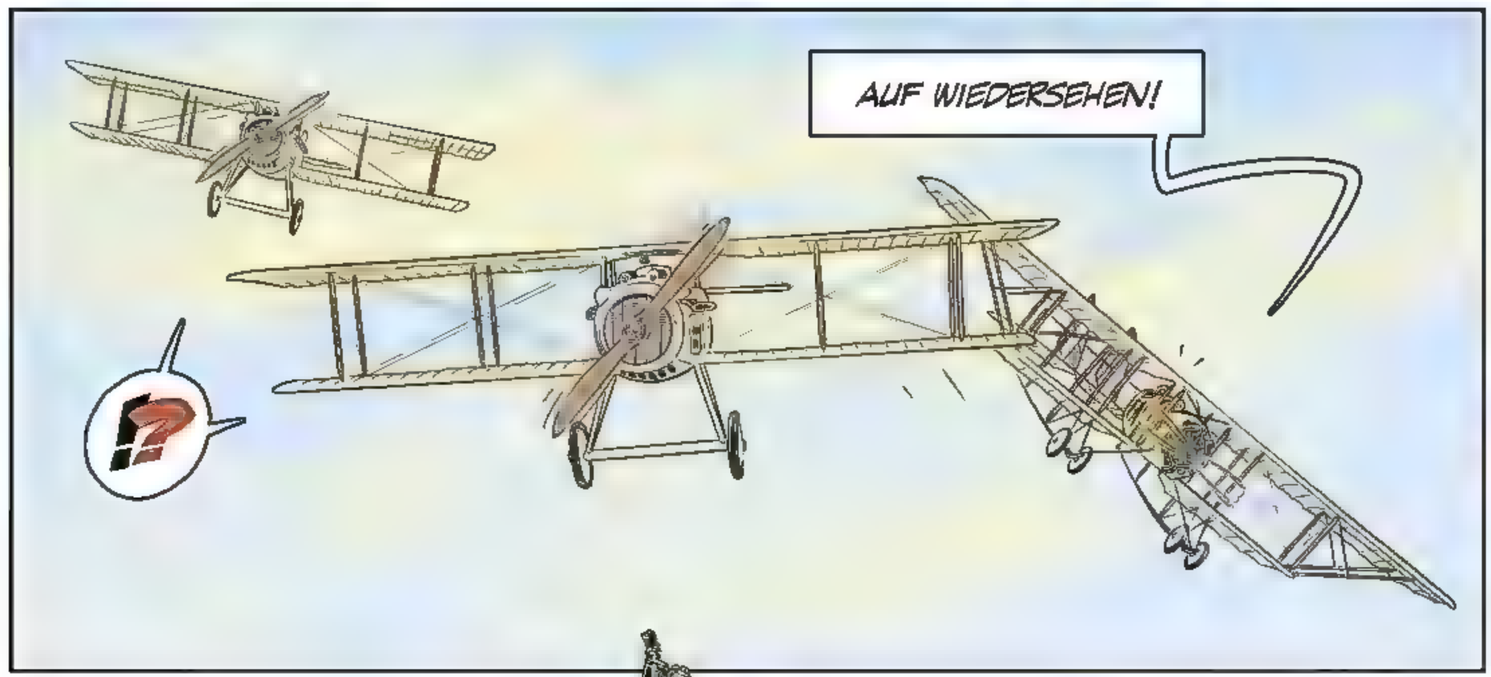
BEFORE THEY SPOT--

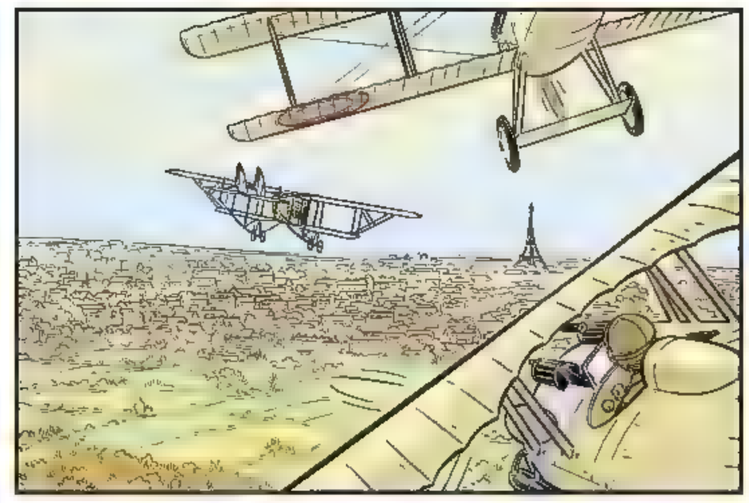
TOO LATE!
SCHEISSE!
THEY'RE COMING RIGHT AT US!



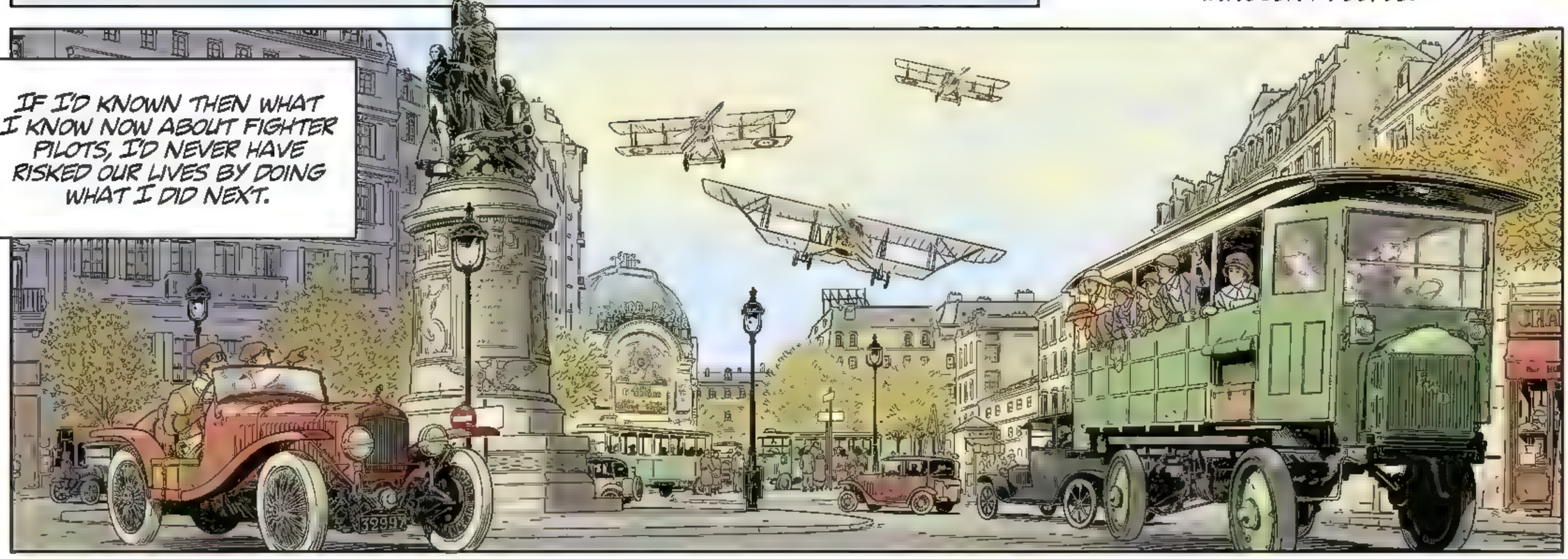








WE WERE OVER THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY, AND I HOPED OUR TWO ESCORTS WOULDN'T DARE SHOOT US DOWN, IN CASE WE CRASHED INTO SOME HOUSES AND KILLED OR INJURED INNOCENT PEOPLE.



?!

BUT, WOULD YOU BELIEVE, I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO BRING THE G.3 DOWN AMONG GOOD CHRISTIAN PEOPLE, WHO LET ME LAND ON A DESERTED STREET...

!!

WELL, ALMOST.

AAAAAAAH!!

SSCHRRRR

CRRRAK

LORD JESUS!

HOW AWFUL!

YOU OK?

NOTHING BROKEN?

WE'RE JUST FINE, FATHER, BUT THINGS ARE LOOKING LESS GOOD FOR YOU!

?!

SORRY!

YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO WALK HOME!

WELL, I NEVER!

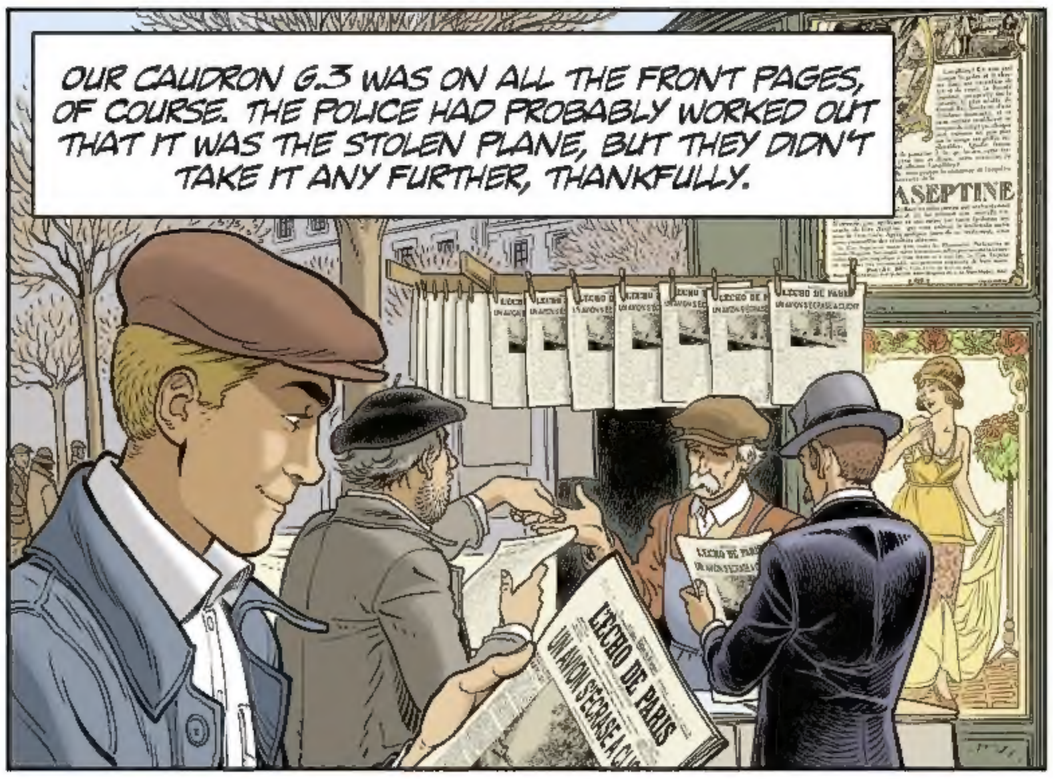
GANGSTERS?!

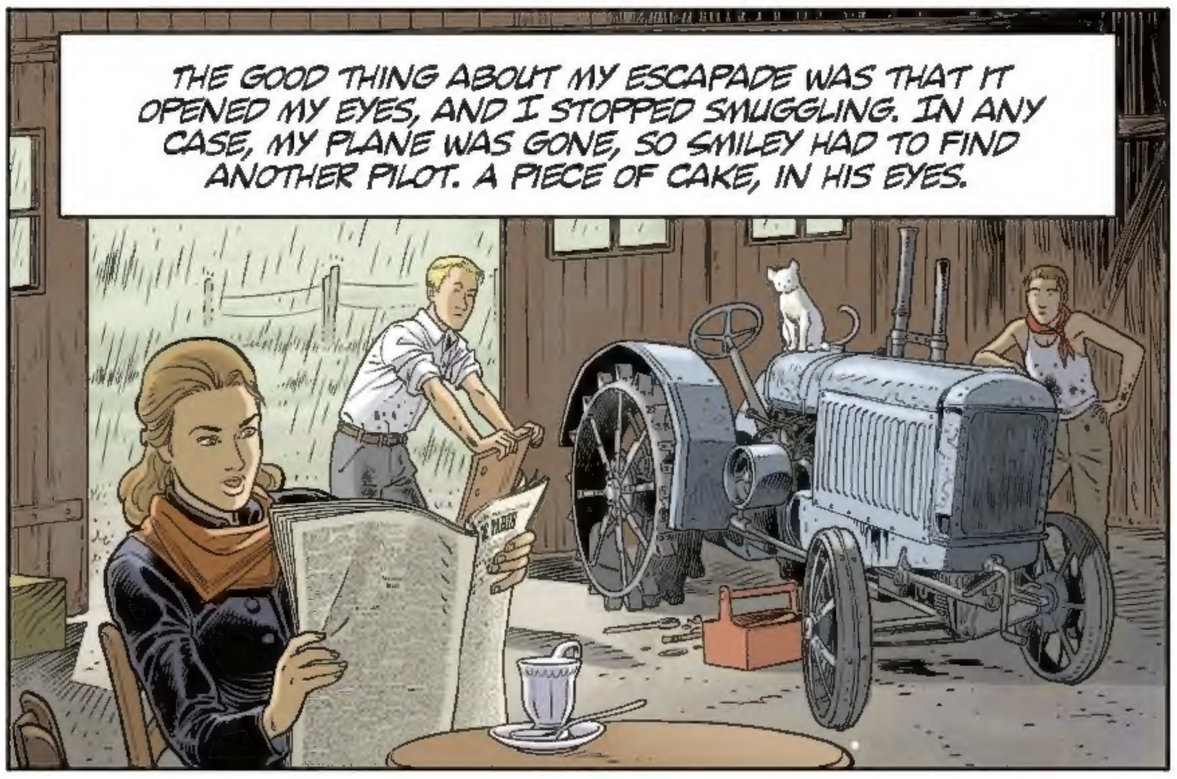
NOT VERY CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR, ADMITTEDLY! BUT WE'D CAUSED THE PRIEST A MINOR INCONVENIENCE TO SAVE OURSELVES A MUCH GREATER ONE. GOD WOULD UNDERSTAND!

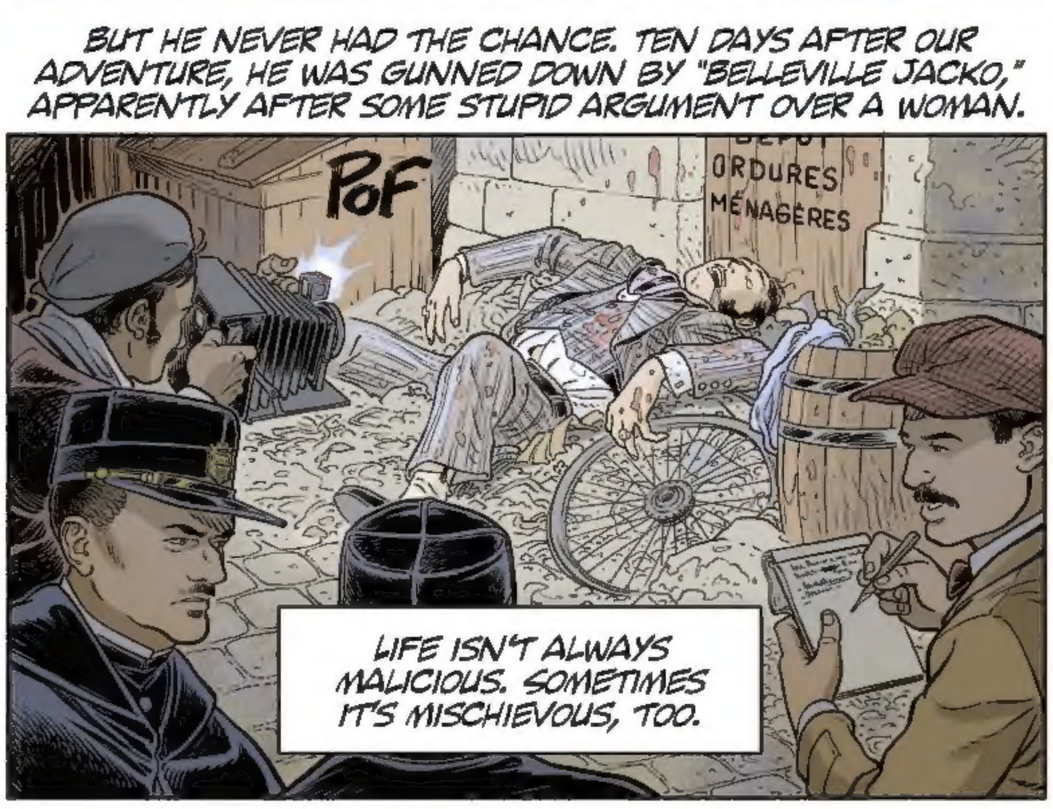
TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR HIM, WE LEFT THE CAR NEAR A CHURCH AND WALKED THE REST OF THE WAY HOME SEPARATELY.
METRO
ENTRÉE

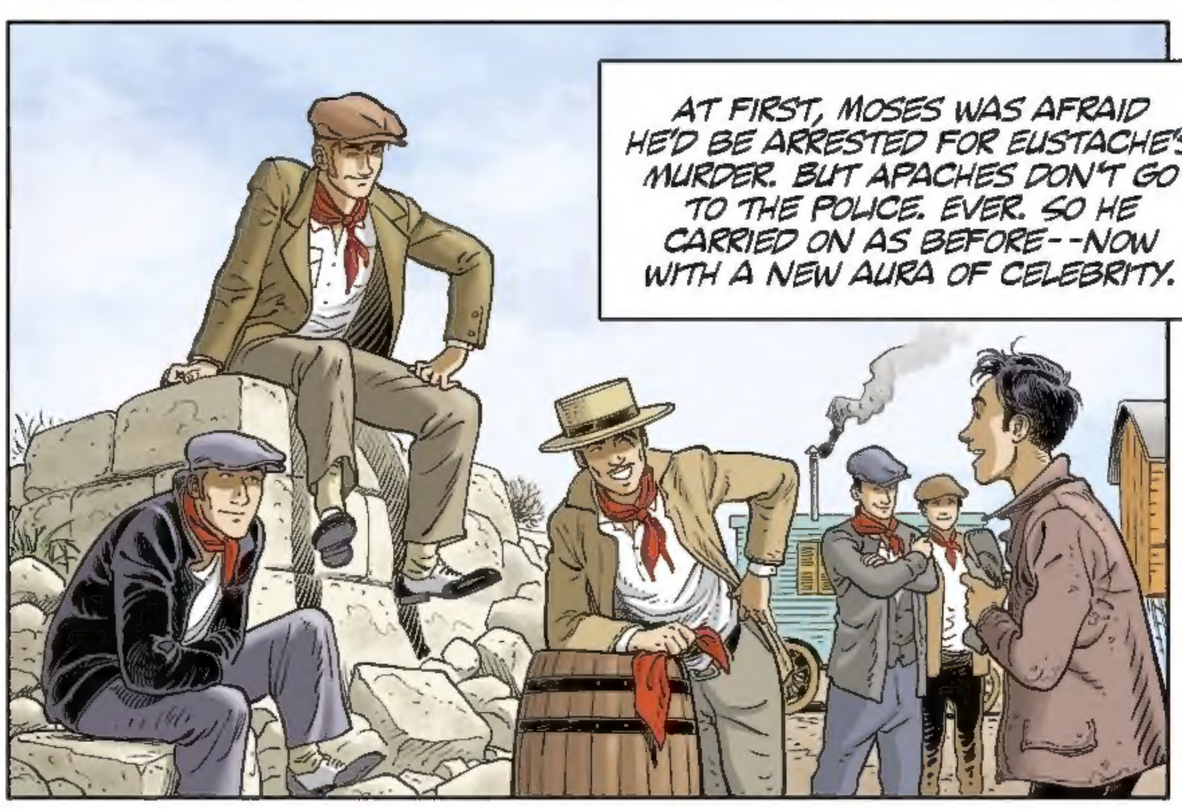
I WASN'T AFRAID OF DYING, THAT'S ALL! WITHOUT ROSA, LIFE SIMPLY WASN'T WORTH LIVING.
CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT SCUM PUT HER ON THE STREET?!

I HID MY ANGER TO MAKE HIM THINK I WAS SCARED.
HE THOUGHT HE WAS REALLY SOMETHING. I JUST WENT FOR HIM.


OUR CAUDRON G.3 WAS ON ALL THE FRONT PAGES, OF COURSE. THE POLICE HAD PROBABLY WORKED OUT THAT IT WAS THE STOLEN PLANE, BUT THEY DIDN'T TAKE IT ANY FURTHER, THANKFULLY.
ASEPTINE
L'ECHO DE PARIS


THE GOOD THING ABOUT MY ESCAPADE WAS THAT IT OPENED MY EYES, AND I STOPPED SMUGGLING. IN ANY CASE, MY PLANE WAS GONE, SO SMILEY HAD TO FIND ANOTHER PILOT. A PIECE OF CAKE, IN HIS EYES.


BUT HE NEVER HAD THE CHANCE. TEN DAYS AFTER OUR ADVENTURE, HE WAS GUNNED DOWN BY "BELLEVILLE JACKO," APPARENTLY AFTER SOME STUPID ARGUMENT OVER A WOMAN.
PoF
ORDURES MÉNAGÈRES
LIFE ISN'T ALWAYS MALICIOUS. SOMETIMES IT'S MISCHIEVOUS, TOO.


AT FIRST, MOSES WAS AFRAID HE'D BE ARRESTED FOR EUSTACHE'S MURDER. BUT APACHES DON'T GO TO THE POLICE. EVER. SO HE CARRIED ON AS BEFORE--NOW WITH A NEW AURA OF CELEBRITY.

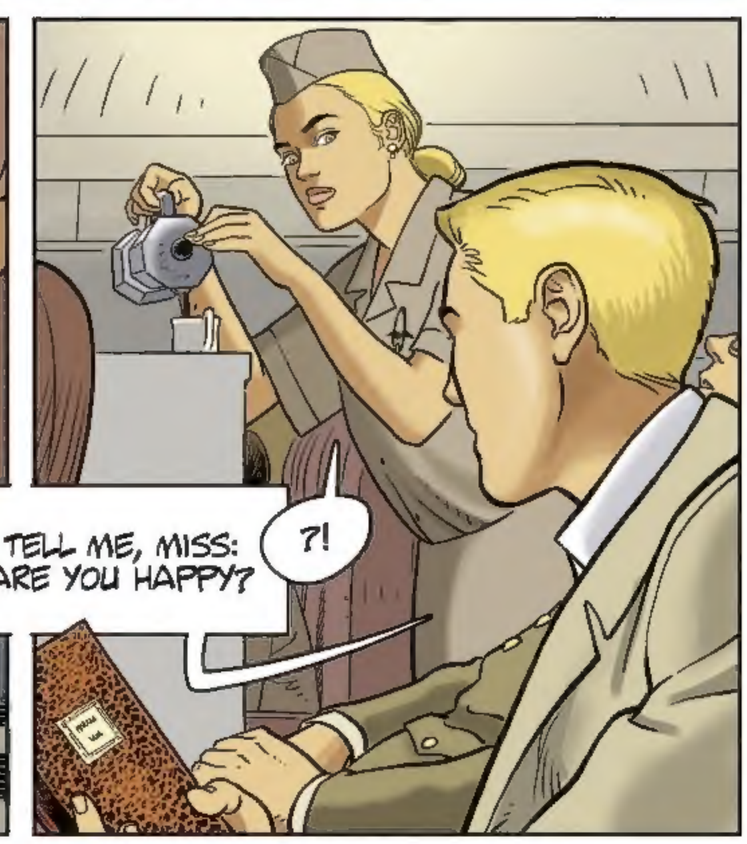
At first, Moses was afraid
Eustache's murder. But Apaches
the police. Ever. So he carried on as be
aura of celebrity.

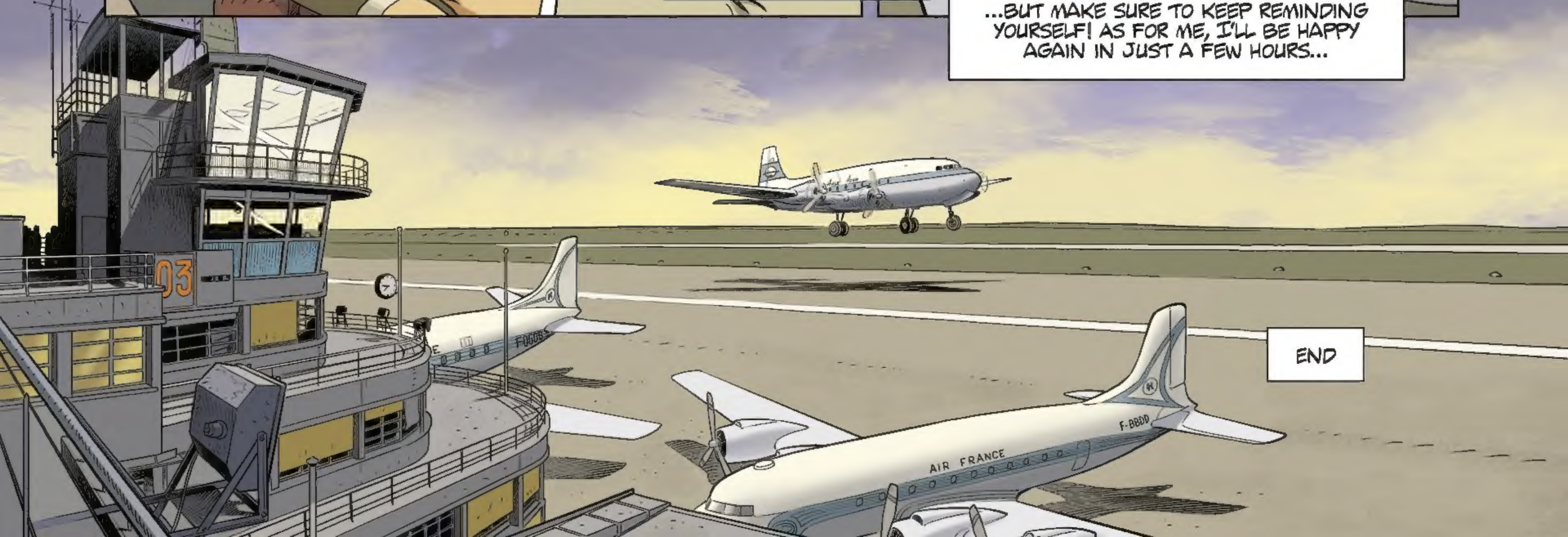
As for me, I'd saved enough money to complete my civil aviation course. And when I wasn't studying, I helped Oscar and Adèle with the farmwork.

It was undoubtedly one of the happiest times of my life.

But when you're happy, you're almost always too dumb to realize it...

YANN CALEC CLOSED THE JOURNAL IN WHICH "HARD KNOCK" TANGUY HAD SO INTIMATELY CONFIDED, AND SAT STARING AT IT FOR A LONG MOMENT. A SUDDEN URGE TO EMBRACE HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER MADE HIM SHUDDER.





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JCK

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